



SISTER NIVEDITA



MONI BAGCHEE

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SISTER NIVEDITA

A Study Of Her Life and Works



SISTER NIVEDITA

by
MONI BAGCHEE

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*Dedicated to the memory of
Swami Vivekananda
and
Sister Nivedita
who have placed India firmly on
the road to greatness.*

IN MEMORIAM

Within that Innermost which is the Self
Her soul hath sped from mortal bondage freed,
And soaring from that scene which lies enshrined
By circling hills before Himalayan snows.
Her spirit found that quest it sought on earth
Breaking the many chains of changing form,
It found within it's Self the Great Ideal
Long dreamed of here as changeless Truth.

Gone now the toil which was her aspiration
Her Master's Message the whole wide world to give.
The written page alone outlines the time
Her Spirit's feeling to another world;
But Page, inspired, prophetic, resonant
With all she heard and saw and loved
In the Presence of that Light which was her God,
Reflected in "The Master as I saw Him".

From mortal view and mortal frame transferred
To endless bliss and everlasting peace,
She enters now that High Transfigured Life
Which is the Self-Realisation of her soul,
Her written word: "Weep not for the dead,
But for the living who have yet to die",
True: the grief shall pass, whatever is,
And then the thundering note shall sound:
Another soul Emancipation finds,
Freed from sense and sense-fed thought
The Presence and the Infinite Truth of Self
Above the shadow and the change of life.

—J. F. Alexander



VICE-PRESIDENT

VICE-PRESIDENTS LODGE
2, KING EDWARD ROAD
NEW DELHI

January 10, 1957

My dear Shri Moni Bagchee,

Thank you very much for your kind letter and the book SISTER NIVEDITA you sent me. I read it now. It is ~~a most~~ *an* adequate account of the life and personality of the late Sister Nivedita. Extracts from her writings add to the value of the book.

Yours sincerely,

S. Radhakrishnan
(S. Radhakrishnan)

Shri Moni Bagchee,
Presidency Library,
15, College Square,
Calcutta

INTRODUCTION

"Nivedita is the fairest flower of my work in England."

Swami Vivekananda.

"Thy people shall be my people" was the vow Sister Nivedita took when she left her country to dedicate herself to her task. Her life is one of the most significant examples of utter selflessness. This selflessness was uniformed with a strong and brilliant intellect and a steady and unwavering character. Nivedita's name given by her Master is fully justified by her life consecrated to the service of Mother India and we should be awakened to the sense of our gratitude to the noble daughter of freedom-loving Ireland, whose life was inspired by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ethos.

Born Margaret Noble, the daughter of an Irish Clergyman, Nivedita came under the influence of Swami Vivekananda at the prime of her youth. She came to India towards the end of the last century and was given the name 'Nivedita' which means the dedicated one. Since then her life was fully consecrated at the altar of Mother India and she worked tirelessly on many fronts—education, science, art, social welfare and politics—untill she died in October, 1911.

It is a beautiful and remarkable story. The saintly, self-sacrificing woman, the robust maiden of high degree who threw aside the pleasures of a life of ease to serve the poor and down-trodden people of India, the fairest flower of Vivekananda's work in England, giving lessons to the girl students of her school at Baghbazar under conditions not altogether favourable, or nursing with the radiance of her goodness the plague-stricken dying boy on her lap—the picture is familiar to all who knew her. But

it is sad to think that such a resplendent figure has now become dim to our memory, nay Nivedita is almost forgotten today.

When we think of her life of sustained and intense endeavour, her rich intelligence, and overflowing humanity in the service of those among whom she had cast her lot, we owe a deep debt of gratitude to Sister Nivedita. Her work lies buried in a dozen of books and in the forgotten columns of the contemporary newspapers. Perhaps a generation hence it will all be forgotten.

The women of India today owe a great debt of gratitude to Sister Nivedita, who was one of the pioneers in the field of educating Indian woman who had fallen into a most subordinate position before the advent of Sister Nivedita and reformers like her. Indeed, she was an educationist of the highest order and she has left a valuable legacy in this respect in her *Hints On National Education*, one of the remarkable books we have from her pen.

Her love for India, which we may as well describe as her patriotism, did not fight shy of politics. She entered heart and soul into it, playing an important part in nursing revolutionism and revolutionaries, and her name is associated with the activities of Sri Aurobindo and Tilak, Gokhale and Upadhyaya. She was absolutely without fear and exhibited a strong hatred for the English rulers in India. It was possible due to the fact that the old Irish blood had not quite left her. History may in future show how much the bomb owes its introduction to India to Nivedita.

Hers was a life inured to suffering, and hers the satisfaction born of sacrifice. She is one of those whom human nature and circumstances can but rarely produce and whose achievements are like lights which guide the weary wayfarer in life's common road. Such lights can

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never be extinguished, they shine for eternity through the portals of the past. We must not forget that Nivedita "cannot be divorced from the world 'India', or her name and thought severed from all that has been for the making of the modern Hindu and Indian mind. She and her Master, Swami Vivekananda, have been, as none others, the makers and shapers and the interpreters of that which is to be the India and Hinduism of the future born of the India and Hinduism of the past."

Everything about Nivedita was sincere, frank and pure while her unaffected modesty was as charming as it was admirable. Verily she was a woman with an extraordinary intellect, of extensive and accurate reading. She was intensely impulsive, but every impulse was generous and her earnestness of purpose was consuming. None could fathom the depth of her nature or the passion that burned in her as a holy flame.

I have attempted in the following pages to record a straightforward objective narration of the eventful career of Sister Nivedita and I have tried my best to gather all the facts of her life from various sources and much of the material in this book is drawn from the author's Bengali biography of Nivedita published earlier.

The Author.

Calcutta,
October, 1956.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

OUR BUDDHA

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PART I

LIFE



1

FIRST MEETING WITH THE MASTER

TOWARDS the close of the nineteenth century there appeared one day in London an Indian Yogi. A strange man with a strange figure. Beautiful like an angel, bold like a hero and learned like a scholar, he was no other person than Swami Vivekananda—the young Sanyasin whose name and fame had already crossed the Atlantic as a result of his historical speech before the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893. While in America, Swamiji intended to visit Europe, specially London, the centre of Western civilisation, as a Hindu missionary. He had been invited by Miss Henrietta Muller to be her guest at London. Mr. E. T. Sturdy, another admirer of Swami Vivekananda, had also invited him to come and live with him. The Swami knew that London offered a great field for his work there and he also knew that Mr. Sturdy would help him in his mission. Mr. E. T. Sturdy had long been interested in Indian thought and, indeed, had been in India and undergone severe asceticism in a hill station in the Himalayas. It was quite appropriate therefore, that he should introduce the Hindu Yogi as the Swami was then called, to the London society, and assist him in forming his classes and propagating the Vedanta teachings. This Mr. Sturdy “was a man of means and learning and position, and his name lent

weight among the circle of his friends who went to the Sanyasin's classes."

It was in the year 1895 in the month of October that Swami Vivekananda came to London. London accorded him a warm reception. Soon his name spread to the four corners of England. Newspapers came out with interesting accounts about the Hindu monk. The London intelligentsia began to admire him spontaneously. Everybody was eager to hear him. His lectures and religious discourses simply captivated all. Such a thing never happened in London.

It was the evening of October 22 and the place was the Princes' Hall at Piccadilly, one of the most fashionable quarters in the metropolis. And here Swami Vivekananda delivered his first public address before a large gathering of people, representing all walks of life and some of the best thinkers in London. Among the audience there happened to be present a young lady. She seemed to possess a strong personality combined with talent. She had already heard about this strange Hindu Yogi and it was more out of curiosity than anything else that she was present there to hear the lecture of this Indian monk. Much to the surprise of the audience, the speaker arrived at the punctual time and no sooner had he appeared on the platform than everybody's gaze was fixed on him. What an imposing figure to look at! Clad in the flowing crimson robes with a big crimson turban on his head, he stood there like a prophet to deliver his message for which Europe had waited so long. His calm and kindly features with his face "wearing that look of mingled gentleness and loftiness" that only a Raphael could paint, he looked so simple, yet so dynamic that everybody present there felt the touch of his magnetic personality. The young lady also felt it and what is more, she

almost felt spellbound inwardly at the very sight of the man who was to become her Master! .

The lecture was a tremendous success. Next morning all the London papers were filled with complimentary comments. The young lady was reading at her residence one such comment in the well-known paper, *The Standard*:

"Since the days of Rammohan Roy, with the single exception of Keshab Chandra Sen, there has not appeared on an English platform a more interesting Indian figure than the Hindu who lectured in the Princes' Hall. In the course of his lecture he made some remorselessly disparaging criticism on the work that factories, engines, and other inventions and books were doing for man, compared with half-a-dozen works spoken by Buddha or Jesus. The lecture was extemporaneous and was delivered in a pleasing voice free from any kind of hesitation."

As days went by, the London public were informed of this Sanyasin's being a monk and a teacher, and scores gathered at his quarters, seeking instruction, or desiring to satisfy their curiosity. As for the young lady, it was a novel and satisfying experience. The lectures of the Hindu monk made a deep and lasting impress on her mind. This young lady, Miss Margaret Elizabeth Noble, afterwards came to be known as Sister Nivedita.

Margaret Noble was struck with the novelty and the breadth of Swami Vivekananda's religious culture and the intellectual freshness of his philosophical outlook based on Vedanta, as also with the fact that "his call was sounded in the name of that which was strongest and finest, and was not in any way dependent on the meaner elements in man." She weighed the Swami's words in the balance and at first found some difficulty in accepting his views, but this, in the Swami's eyes, was a sign of the power of true penetration, for he knew that though

she was now hesitating, once she accepts, there would be no more ardent champion of his ideas than she. We shall see later on how this prophecy was fulfilled in the life of Miss Noble. It required many months' continuous searching of heart, she herself confessed, before she fully accepted Swami Vivekananda as her Master.

Miss Noble's description of her first meeting with Swami Vivekananda is interesting. She writes:

"Even in far away London indeed, the first time I saw him, the occasion must have stirred in his mind, as it does in mine, recalling it now, a host of association connected with his own sun-steeped land. The time was a cold Sunday afternoon in November, and the place, it is true, a West-end drawing-room. But he was seated, facing a half-circle of listeners, with the fire on the hearth behind him, and as he answered question after question, breaking now and then into the chanting of some Sanskrit text in illustration of his reply, the scene must have appeared to him, while twilight passed into darkness, only as a curious variant upon the Indian garden, or on the group of hearers gathered at sundown round the Sadhu who sits beside the well, or under the tree outside the village-bounds. Never again in England, did I see the Swami as a teacher, in such simple fashion. Later, he was always lecturing, or the questions he answered were put with formality by members of larger audiences. Only this first time we were but fifteen or sixteen guests, intimate friends many of us, and he sat amongst us, in his crimson robe and girdle, as one bringing us news from a far land, with a curious habit of saying now and again 'Siva! Siva!' and wearing that look of gentleness and loftiness, that one sees on the faces of those who live much in meditation, that look, perhaps, that Raphael had painted for us on the brow of the Sistine Child.... That afternoon is now ten years ago, and fragments only of

the talk come back to me. But never to be forgotten are the Sanskrit verses that he chanted for us, in those wonderful Eastern tones at once so reminiscent of, and yet so different from, the Gregorian music of our own churches."

Such was the impression which Swami Vivekananda left on the mind of his future spiritual daughter who was to become the foremost of his disciples. And it fell on her lot afterwards to popularise the philosophy of her Master in India and in the West more than anybody else. A couple of years after her first meeting with the Swami, Miss Noble finally decided to dedicate herself in the services of India. Her Master then praised her in these words: "Nivedita is the fairest flower of my work in England." And the services she rendered and the sacrifices she underwent in her self-chosen mission, amply bear testimony to this beautiful utterance. She was the first Western woman to be received into an Indian monastic order and this is an important fact in the story of Miss Noble's life. She was twenty-eight when she made up her mind to place herself in the hands of Swami Vivekananda and through him, in the services of the people of India. And this meant taking re-birth into the Indian consciousness as well as re-shaping everything she previously was.

Margaret Noble was the daughter of the Rev. Samuel Richmond Noble, and was born at Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, on October 28, 1867. Her ancestors migrated from Scotland to this part of Ireland. Her grand-father, Rev. Noble was a Protestant and a staunch nationalist. Her father was trained for the congregational ministry at the Lancashire Independent College, and died at 34, leaving a widow and three children, of whom Margaret was the eldest. Her mother, Isabel Noble, was a paragon of beauty

and Margaret naturally inherited her mother's appearance to a great extent. Mrs. Ole Bull (known as the 'Dhiramata'), the well-known American disciple of Swami Vivekananda and the God-mother of Sister Nivedita, has recorded this story:

"Mrs. Noble personally told me that she was comparatively young when she became expectant. She was going to be the mother of a child and she naturally felt both joy and apprehension at this prospect. Out of shyness Isabel withheld the news from her relatives for a long time. During this period she always used to pray to God that if the child is safely born, she would dedicate it to Him. Thus it seems to me that long before she was born, Margaret was dedicated to God by her own mother. Who will tell today how far she was influenced by the sentiments of her mother when Margaret was in the womb of Isabel? And, again, who will tell how it happened that her Master while accepting Miss Noble as his disciple, gave her the name, 'Nivedita' or the 'Dedicated One', the name which she fulfilled in letter and spirit."

Margaret was trained as a teacher, being fortunate enough in her girlhood to become acquainted with some of the most enthusiastic apostles of the New Education then at work in London. Her training in child-study was extremely thorough. She was a close student of Froebel, and among her teachers was at least one of the most original English followers of Pestalozzi. Her practical experience was gained as teacher in various girls' schools, and in the beginning of the nineties she opened, at Wimbledon, a school of her own in which she strove to give expression to her broad and vivid conceptions of education for girls. At Wimbledon she was the life and soul of an exceptionally interesting company of modern young men and women, eager enquirers into everything, discussing literature, society and ethics with a

furious and confident energy, and beginning in many directions work which has yielded fruit in the intervening years. "Always it was the enthusiasm for new and free forms of education which was strongest with Margaret Noble, and she was one of the most active of the group which, nearly twenty years ago, established the Sesame Club, the first of those social centres for men and women in London." She moved in quiet but distinguished intellectual circles and was deeply interested in all modern influences and thought. While busy with her school of which she was the Principal, Margaret was also actively engaged in organising and supervising the London branch of the Irish Revolutionary Party with which she was actively associated since her adolescence. It was just at this period of her life that Margaret met Vivekananda in London.

When we study the times and trends under which Miss Noble was born, we find that she imbibed the spirit of Irish nationalism from her very infancy. Indeed, she was born with the heritage of revolution which shaped the course of her life in the fashion of a true revolutionary. This was the characteristics of her life. In the long history of the Irish Freedom Movement, the district of Ulster in North-Ireland where she was born, supplied a number of revolutionary leaders which included among others, her own grand-father and father. Their examples must have inspired Miss Noble to the doctrine of nationalism during the formative period of her life. Love of one's own language, of one's own culture, of one's country's manufactures, love of the sons of the soil, herculean efforts to revive past arts and traditions and serious attempts to understand, the genius of a people and to foster legitimate pride in one's past, these were the forms that nationalism took in Ireland during the nineteenth century. This nationalism so profoundly influenced her character

that Miss Noble herself, when a grown-up girl, became actively associated with the Irish Freedom Movement at its revolutionary stage towards the latter part of the nineteenth century. She continued her revolutionary activities even after her father, Rev. Samuel Richmond Noble, had migrated to Manchester, England, where he held the post of a clergyman. We shall see later on how her nationalist tradition made her quickly to identify with the cause of India's freedom. It is recorded that during this time Miss Noble was also intimately associated with the famous Russian revolutionary, Peter Kropotkin and soon she became a great friend of Kropotkin.

Vivekananda's first visit to London lasted for less than four months, from September to the end of November, 1895. In a sense his visit was the meeting of India and Europe, and it was a meeting full of historical significance. Romain Rolland has rightly said:

"The discovery of England had reserved for him (Swami Vivekananda) an emotion of quite a different order. He came as an enemy, and he was conquered. On his return to India he was to proclaim it with superb loyalty: 'No one ever landed on English soil with more hatred in his heart for a race than I did for the English... there is some among you who loves the English people more than I do now.'"

But while he admired England, Vivekananda never lost sight of his mission to Europe. He meant to use England's greatness in order to realise the spiritual supremacy of India in the world at large. In his first visit to London was laid an unshakable foundation for any future work he might find it fit to initiate. The London intelligentsia was carried away as much by his eloquence as by his speeches based on practical Vedanta. The remarkable way in which he classified religious ideas, the great breadth of his intellectual and spiritual

culture, the newness and profundity of his ideas, the great ethical import attached to everything he uttered, and, finally, his strength, manliness and fearlessness of spirit and above all, his magnetic personality, each and all of these created an indelible impression on those who used to attend his lectures regularly and Mis Noble was one of them. His work in England was really splendid. And it was all the more so, because as a reward of this work, grateful England made a precious gift to India through Vivekananda in the person of Miss Margaret Elizabeth Noble. She accepted him as her Master, after she had attended a few more of his lectures and talks. She admitted that it had never before fallen to her lot to meet with a thinker who in one short hour was able to express all that was the very highest in the way of religious thought.

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NOBLE BECOMES NIVEDITA

DURING his second visit to London in May, 1896, Swami Vivekananda opened regular classes of Vedantic instruction; and certain of an intelligent public, he started with the Yoga of the mind: the *Jnana-Yoga*. In addition, he gave several courses of lectures in a Piccadilly Picture Gallery, at Princes' Hall, in clubs, to educational societies, at Annie Bessant's lodge, and at private circles. But all these classes and Sunday lectures and interviews did not by any means cover the whole of the work the Swami was doing in England. Requested by Miss Margaret Noble, once he delivered an address on "Education" at the Sesame Club. "In this he dealt with the old educational systems of India, pointed out clearly and impressively that the sole aim of the system was 'man-making' and not cramming, and compared it with the present system."

One of the memorable events, during his stay in London, was his meeting with the celebrated Professor Max Muller. Recording his experience of this memorable meeting, the Swami himself wrote later on: ".....What an extraordinary man is Professor Max Muller! I paid a visit to him a few days ago. I should say, that I went to pay my respects to him, for whosoever loves Ramkrishna, whatever be his or her sect, or creed, or nationality, my visit to that person I hold as a

pilgrimage. And what love the Professor bears towards India! I wish I had a hundredth part of that love for my own motherland...Max Muller is a Vedantist of Vedantists."

But apart from the public significance of the Swami's work in London, his second visit is memorable, for it was during this period that he made some of the most valuable contacts of his life and gathered to his fold some of the most diligent and heroic workers and helpers in his cause. In his previous visit he had made acquaintances which ripened into friendship with such talented souls as Miss Henrietta Muller, Miss Margaret Elizabeth Noble, Mr. E. T. Sturdy and others, but now they became his disciples, ready to sacrifice everything for him and his cause. To this group were added two of his most faithful disciples, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. But Vivekananda held Miss Noble as the fairest flower of his work in England. In this connection Romain Rolland has said:

"Margaret Noble made a no less complete gift of herself. The future will always unite her name of initiation, Sister Nivedita, to that of her beloved Master as St. Clara to that of St. Francis. She was the young headmistress of a school in London. Vivekananda spoke at her school, and she was immediately captivated by his charm. But for a long time she struggled against it. She was one of those who came to Vivekananda after each lecture with the words: 'Yes, Swami...But...' She always argued and resisted, being one of those English souls who are hard to overcome, but once conquered, faithful for ever."

The Advaita philosophy of Vivekananda gradually worked wonders in the thought-world of the young Irish lady gifted with a power of rare understanding. Soon after his second visit to London, Miss Noble one day expressed her desire to the Swami that she was willing

to accept the Advaita philosophy as a guiding factor in her life and she also expressed her willingness to come to India to do his intended work for women there. In a letter, the very first one, dated June 7, 1896, Swamiji wrote to her:

"Dear Miss Noble,

My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life. This world is in chains of superstition. I pity the oppressed, whether man or woman, and I pity more the oppressors. One idea that I see clear as daylight is that misery is caused by *ignorance* and nothing else. Who will give the world light? Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.

Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt. It is no superstition with you, I am sure, you have the making in you of a world-mover, and others will also come. Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake, awake, great one! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep? Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the call. What more is in life? What greater work? The details come to me as I go. I never make plans. Plans grow and work themselves. I only say, awake, awake!

May all blessings attend you for ever!

Vivekananda."

The letter was delivered to her by Mr. Godwin, the devoted disciple of the Swami who served him as his secretary and personal attendant. This infallible call from Swamiji reached the sleeping soul and awakened the spirit. Miss Noble was now determined to come to India and see things with her own eyes. Swamiji again wrote to her:

"Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. In my plans of work in India, I have a definite plan to help the women of my own land. I have thought of starting an institution for the education of girls on national lines, producing not only ideal wives and mothers, but *Brahmacharinis* working for the improvement of their own sex. And in this work what is needed is not a man but a woman, a real lioness to work for the Indian women especially.....Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted."

Thus Vivekananda inspired Miss Noble with the idea of being serviceable to the women of India. There could be no better choice than this as will be revealed to us by the subsequent story of her noble life.

December 13, 1896. A farewell reception was held in honour of Swami Vivekananda at the Royal Society of Painters in Piccadilly. Scores of people from all parts of the city, and some even from the distant suburbs poured into the hall. Miss Noble was also present there. Mr. Eric Hammond describes this farewell gathering in the following words:

"It was Sunday in London. This afternoon the friends of Swamiji were to say 'Good-bye' to him whose coming had meant so much to them. In the hall of meeting paintings hung upon the walls; palms, flowers and ferns

decorated the platform from which Swamiji would utter his final speech in England's great metropolis to the British peoples. All sorts and conditions of men were there, but all alike were filled by one desire; to see him, to hear him, even it may be, to touch his garment once again...Speeches illustrating the esteem and affection which Swamiji had won, were made by men and by women, followed by loud applause. Many were silent, tongue-tied and sad at heart. Tears were very near to some eyes. Grey and gloom without intensified and deepened by grey and gloom within. One form, one figure, fought and triumphed over sorrow; arrayed in garments, glistening as of amber, Swamiji passed among the people, like a living shaft of sunshine. 'Yes, yes,' he said, 'we shall meet again; we shall.'

The Chairman of the meeting, Mr. E. T. Sturdy, presented an address to the Swami who was much moved and replied in terms of great endearment and glowing spiritual fervour. The Swami's last lecture in London on the "Advaita Vedanta" was the fitting culmination of his triumphant tour in the West, as it speaks the final word on the highest stage of Realisation. Many people present at the meeting declared that the manner and matter of his exposition of the Vedanta philosophy revealed to them an entirely new and encouraging view of life. And it equally revealed to Miss Noble particularly, an entirely new and encouraging view of life. Thus writes she:

"To not a few of us the words of Swami Vivekananda came as living water to men perishing of thirst. Many of us have been conscious for years past of that growing uncertainty and despair, with regard to Religion, which has beset the intellectual life of Europe for half a century. Belief in the dogmas of Christianity has become impossible to us, and we had no tool, such as we now hold, by which to cut away the doctrinal shell from the

kernel of Reality, in our faith. To these, the Vedanta has given intellectual confirmation and philosophical expression of their own mistrusted intuitions. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light... It was the Swami's '*I am God*' that came as something always known, only never said before... Yet again, it was the Unity of Man, that was the touch needed to rationalise all previous experiences and give logical sanction to the thirst for absolute service never boldly avowed in the past. Some by one gate, and some by another, we have all entered into a great heritage and we know it..."

Vivekananda left England on December 16, 1896 and after visiting Italy, Switzerland and other European countries, he returned to India by the middle of January, 1897. Margaret arrived India next January. She was twenty-eight when she made up her mind to place her fate in the hands of Swami Vivekananda whom she finally accepted as her Master. But the acceptance was not so easy, for from the very beginning the Swami insisted on her to make herself a Hindu, "to Hinduise her thoughts, her conceptions, her habits, and to forget even the memory of her own past." We shall come to that story later on.

As we have seen, Miss Noble used to attend every lecture of Swami Vivekananda during his first and second visit to London. She seldom missed his lectures. Not that she accepted everything she heard, but these lectures and discourses had an abiding influence on her mind. How she was gradually drawn to the ideals of her Master will be best understood in her own words and here we quote some of her experiences as recorded in her masterpiece, *The Master As I Saw Him*:

"In the meantime, as I look back upon that time, I feel that what we all really entered upon in the Swami's classes was not so much an intellectual exposition, as a

life of new and lofty emotions,—or, as they would be called in India, 'realisations.'

"We heard the exclamation, in describing the worship of God as child, 'do we *want* anything from Him?' We bowed to the teaching that 'love is always a manifestation of bliss,' and that any pang of pain or regret was therefore a mark of selfishness and physicality. We accepted the austere ruling that any, even the slightest, impulse of differentiation, as between ourselves and others was 'hatred', and that only the opposite of this was 'love'. Many who have ceased to believe in the creed of their childhood have felt that at least the good of others was still an end itself, and that the possibility of service remained, to give a motive to life. It is strange, now that ten years have passed, to remember the sense of surprise with which, holding this opinion, we listened to the decorous eastern teaching, that highest of all gifts was spirituality, a degree lower, intellectual knowledge, and that all kinds of physical and material help came last. All our welling pity for sickness and for poverty classified in this fashion! It has taken me years to find out, but I now know, that in train of the higher giving, the lower must needs follow.

"Similarly, to our Western fanaticism about pure air and hygienic surroundings, as if these were marks of saintliness, was opposed the stern teaching of indifference to the world. Here indeed, we came up against a closed door, and had no key. When the Swami said, in bold consciousness of paradox, that the saints had lived on mountain-tops 'to enjoy the scenery', and when he advised his hearers to keep flowers and incense in their worship-rooms, and to care much for the purity and cleansing of food and person, we did not understand enough to connect the two extremes. But in fact he was preaching our own doctrine of physical refinement, as it

would be formulated in India. And is it not true that until we in the West have succeeded in cleansing the slums of our great cities, our fastidiousness is very like the self-worship of the privileged?

"A like fate awaited our admiration for such saints as knew how to order their wordly affairs with conspicuous success and prudence. True spirituality was indifferent to, nay contemptuous and intolerant of, the things of the world. This message to Swami never mitigated. In giving it, he never faltered. The highest spirituality cannot tolerate the world.

"We understand clearly enough that these were the ideals of sainthood only. We were learning chapter after chapter of a great language which was to make it easy for us to hold communion with the ends of the earth. We gathered no confusion as to those questions which concern the life of citizenship and domestic virtue and form what may be regarded as the kindergarten of the soul. The idea that one country might best advance itself by learning to appreciate those ideals of order and responsibility which formed the glory of another was in no wise discredited. At the same time we were given, as the eternal watchword of the Indian ideals, 'Spirituality cannot tolerate the world.' Did we, in contradiction, point to monastic orders, well-governed, highly organised, devoted to the public good, and contrast our long roll of abbots, bishops, and saintly lady-abbesses, with a few ragged and God-intoxicated beggars of the East? Yet we had to admit that even in the West, when the flame of spirituality had blazed suddenly to its brightest, it had taken their form. For those who know the land of Meera Bae and Chaitanya, of Tukaram and Ramanuja, can hardly resist the impulse to clothe with the yellow garb the memory of Saint Francis of Assisi also.

"The Swami was not always entirely impersonal.
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Once after a lecture he came up to a small group of us, and said, *a propos* of some object that had been opened up, 'I have a superstition,—it is nothing, you know, but a personal superstition!—that the same soul who came once as Buddha came afterwards as Christ.' And then, lingering on the point of departure, he drifted into talk of his 'old Master,' of whom we then heard for the first time, and of the girl who, wedded and forgotten, gave her husband his freedom with tears. His voice had sunk lower, as he talked, till the tones had become dream-like. But finally, almost in soliloquy, he shook off the mood that had stolen upon him, saying with a long breath, 'Yes, yes! these things have been, and they will again be. Go in peace my daughter, thy faith hath made the whole!'"

Another incident is worth mentioning here. This happened on an evening in London on the eve of Swamiji's departure. Miss Noble told him of her willingness to help Swamiji in his work in India. Vivekananda was evidently surprised, but said quietly, "For my own part I will be incarnated two hundred times, if that is necessary, to do this work amongst my people, that I have undertaken." The words went straight into her mind. They revealed to her the fact that this Sannyasin was no ordinary monk bent on merely missionary work. A great heart, and a noble spirit were encased in that frame, she could at once perceive it. As days went by, Miss Noble felt within herself that here was a man whose breadth of vision crossed the ordinary bounds to embrace the whole humanity; here was a man who has come to fulfil something for which the whole world had waited so long and so anxiously; here was a man who believed in the progress of the mankind, who revered the ancient teachers of the world and who believed implicitly in himself and finally, here was a man who lived a clean

life and was inspired by high ideals, and accepted his Guru's teachings in all humility and without question; again, here was a man who could be said to be the true servant of God.

Such were the feelings of Miss Noble, then at the prime of her youth, after her meetings with the Indian Yogi. She was now profoundly inspired and she felt the call, so irresistible yet so affectionate to which she responded with her heart and soul. Yes, she would go to India, live there amidst all hardships and devote herself to the work which her Master would like her to do. But suppose she fails to come out of the ordeal, then what will happen to her? Let the story continue in her own words:

"And the words stand in my own mind which he wrote to me on the eve of my departure, 'I will stand by you unto death, whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta, or remain in it. The tusks of the elephant come out, but they never go back. Even so are the words of a man.'"

The more she weighed in her mind the words she had heard during the Swami's first and second visit to London, the more Miss Noble recognised the heroic fibre of the man. She finally decided to make herself the servant of his love for his own people. Thus deeply attracted by his personality and conceptions as a religious teacher, Miss Margaret Elizabeth Noble became the disciple of Swami Vivekananda. And when she became his disciple, she was no longer Miss Noble, she became Nivedita—The Dedicated One. So complete was the strange metamorphosis that it can only be perceived and felt in our mind and thought. The rest of the story is concerned with Nivedita or the Sister Nivedita as she was fondly called by every eminent Indian of the period.

3

THE MASTER AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

A BRIEF survey of Vivekananda's philosophy is necessary in order to understand the underlying forces that shaped the life of Miss Noble after her re-birth as Sister Nivedita. To those acquainted with the life-story of Swami Vivekananda, it is well known that his study of Western philosophy, science, history and art were intense. The abstruse philosophy of Herbert Spencer interested him particularly and later on he used the Spencerian mode of reasoning in his argumentations on the more abstruse doctrines of the Upanishada and the Vedanta. Even as a college student he was cognisant of the fact that most philosophical systems are only intellectual diagrams, giving no place to the emotions of man, thereby stifling his creative and responsive faculties. It was therefore natural for him to believe nothing without understanding. He did not want diagrams of Truth. He wanted the Truth. At this time, his biographers tell us, Vivekananda always held that true philosophy "should be the mother of spiritual action, the fountain-head of creative energy, the highest and noblest stimulus to the will."

Vivekananda also studied the system of the German philosophers, particularly Kant and Schopenhauer, as well as John Stuart Mill and August Comte and delved into

the mystical and analytical speculations of the ancient Aristotelian school. For a time he found refuge and solace in the Positivist philosophy of Comte. But never did his enthusiasm "for the truth interfere with his subjecting any newer and greater revelation before accepting it, to the same keen-eyed scrutiny he had given his earlier beliefs, and comparing it to the systems of his own land." We all know that for a time he became an atheist and was in full rebellion against the Hindu social system. Indeed, this was a tempestuous period in his life. His mind was carried by his own impetus beyond the dark and questionable realms of the senses into the world of pure intellectuality. He was determined to find a way out of the network of ignorance to the reality of his own nature and to find a way to God, if God existed. To a mind of his mould agnosticism was thus only a mood. In him was latent the mystic-that-was-to-be, and his spirited soul could not stop its questionings at the agnostic's half-way house. One can also trace in the life of Vivekananda that the monastic instinct was natural to him even though he was a jubilant lover of life. To gain a clear perspective of Vivekananda's personality during the early stage of his mental development, it is better to quote the observations of one of his fellow-students, Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal, the renowned savant of India:

"This was the beginning of a critical period in his mental history, during which he awoke to self-consciousness, and laid the foundations of his future personality. John Stuart Mill's *Three Essays on Religion* had upset his boyish theism and easy optimism which he had imbibed from the outer circles of the Brahmo Samaj...A friend introduced him to the study of Hume's Scepticism and Herbert Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable, and his unbelief gradually assumed the

form of a settled philosophical scepticism. He tried diverse teachers, creeds and cults, and it was this quest that brought him, though at first in a doubting spirit, to the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar, who spoke to him with authority as none had spoken before, and by his *sakti* brought peace into his soul and healed the wounds of his spirit."

The subsequent life-history of Swami Vivekananda is too well known to need repetition here. Those who watched with intense interest the transformation of Narendranath Datta into Swami Vivekananda, have duly

recorded their observations which may be summed up in these lines: "He thought when he met the Master, his guide and companion, that he had found a haven of peace and the end of all his struggles, but he was at the same time unable to accept the teacher in toto. As the Master tried to kindle the sleeping spirituality of his disciple, the latter asserted his intellectual strength. Gradually his opposition died away in complete surrender. The inner history of this conversion and illumination is too subtle to be described in words." The events that finally led to the triumphant emergence of Swami Vivekananda, the disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa are now familiar to all. Thus observes Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta:

"From Ramakrishna he learnt that God can be worshipped as without form, also with form. Now, the question is, did he accept the mediaval ideology and its institutions? In our perusal of his works, we find that he did. A patriotic mind with a veneration for the past glory of his motherland, cannot remain callous and indifferent to the achievement of his forbears. The dialectical antithesis between the past glory of one's motherland and the present helpless subserviency of the country and void in national life, will prompt a patriot

to turn back affectionately towards the deeds of his forefathers. It is to be admitted here, that Swami Vivekananda like many persons of a transitional period had a complex character. His was the life of striking contrasts and moods of infinite variety."

Now let us hear the story of Swami Vivekananda's inner struggle culminating in his complete transformation, in his own words:

"But notwithstanding these forced atheistic views, the vivid memory of the divine visions I had experienced since my boyhood, and especially after my contact with Sri Ramakrishna, would lead me to think that God must exist and that there must be some way to realise Him. Otherwise life would be meaningless. In the midst of all troubles and tribulations I must find that way. Days passed, and the mind continued to waver between doubt and certainty. Various thoughts crowded in on my mind. Suddenly I felt as if by some divine power the coverings of my soul were removed one after another. All my former doubts regarding the co-existence of divine justice and mercy, and the presence of misery in the creation of a Blissful Providence, were automatically solved. By a deep introspection I found the meaning of it all and was satisfied."

Thus we see that the great disciple whose task it was to take up the spiritual heritage of Ramakrishna and disseminate the grain of his thought throughout the world, was both physically and morally his direct antithesis. "The synthesis of his great opposing forces" says Romain Rolland, "took years of struggle, consuming his courage and his very life. Battle and life for him were synonymous." The struggle was constantly renewed throughout Vivekananda's life. This warrior and conqueror wanted to have everything, both God and the world—to dominate everything—to renounce everything.

In order to trace the background of his philosophy, we have to look for another element in Vivekananda's nature. Thus says Romain Rolland:

"There was a third element, which Naren himself had not foreseen, but which the prophetic eye of Ramakrishna had discerned from afar. At the time when the others were showing anxiety of mistrust with regard to this young man, in whom such tumultuous forces were at work, the Master had declared: 'The day when Naren comes in contact with the suffering and misery the pride of his character will melt into a mood of infinite compassion. His strong faith in himself will be an instrument to re-establish in discouraged souls the confidence and faith they have lost. And the freedom of his conduct, based on mighty self-mastery, will shine brightly in the eyes of others, as a manifestation of the true liberty of the Ego.' This meeting with the suffering and misery, the misery of his people, the misery of India was to be the flint upon the steel, whence a spark would fly to set the whole soul on fire."

And it is out of this fire that in course of time there emerged the man with a mission to serve humanity, the man who declared emphatically: "If you want to find God, serve man!" This consciousness of his mission took complete possession of Swami Vivekananda and there emerged out of it a true servant of humanity.

Religion, as Swami Vivekananda understood it, has a special appeal to this age. The underlying philosophy of his religion has its source on the lofty ideals of Vedanta as preached and practised by his own Master, Ramakrishna. To him religion was the fellow citizen of every thinking man, and its only enemy was intolerance. Thus he declared:

"All narrow, limited, fighting ideals of religion must be given up. The religious ideals of the future must

embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great, and at the same time, have infinite scope for future development. All that was good in the past must be preserved; and the doors must be kept open for future additions to the already existing store. Religions must also be inclusive, and not look down with contempt upon one another, because their particular ideals of God are different."

It is clear therefore that religion for Vivekananda is synonymous with universalism of the spirit. And it is not until religious conceptions have attained to this universalism, that religion is fully realised. It was the rebel in him that could say: "So long as religion was in the hands of a chosen few, or of a body of priests, it was in temples, churches, books, dogmas, ceremonials, forms and rituals. But when we come to the real, spiritual, universal concept, then, and then alone religion will become real and living; it will come into our very nature, live in our every moment, penetrate every pore of our society, and be infinitely more a power for good than it has ever been before."

In his lectures and letters, discourses and writings, Vivekananda laid special stress not on ritualistic religion but only on rationalistic religion. It is the Advaita of India, Non-Dualism, Unity, the idea of the Absolute, of the Impersonal God, the only religion that can have any hold on intellectual people. According to Vivekananda, the Advaita is the sole possession of India and he is emphatic in this respect when he says:

"The Advaita has twice saved India from materialism. By the coming of Buddha, who appeared in a time of most hideous and widespread materialism. By coming of Shankara, who when materialism had reconquered India in the form of the demoralisation of the government classes and of superstition in the lower orders, put fresh

life into Vedanta, by making a rational philosophy emerge from it."

It was Vivekananda who several centuries after Shankara put fresh life into Vedanta suitable to the modern times and the bigots were nonetheless puzzled when he declared that time has come when intellectuality must combine with religion to give us the highest philosophy. Science and religion will meet and shake hands. Poetry and philosophy will become friends. This will be the religion of the future, and if we can work it out we may be sure that it will be for all times and for all peoples. This is the one way that will prove acceptable to modern science, for it has almost come to it. Today modern science asserts that all things are the manifestations of one force and the same idea was expressed centuries ago by the Rishis of the Upanishads in the following terms: "As the one fire entering into the universe expresses itself in various forms, even so that One Soul is expressing itself in every soul and yet is infinitely more besides."

It was no special brand of philosophy which Vivekananda preached or practised. His was the universal mind, accepting everything and rejecting nothing. Thus he said:

"I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with everyone of them. Is God's book finished or is it still a continuous revelation going on? It is a marvellous book,—these Spiritual Revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran and all other sacred books are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future.

Salutations to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future!"

These were then the ideas of universalism and spiritual brotherhood which came from Vivekananda. Respect for human individuality and its freedom is the core of his philosophy in its practical aspect. No other religion has possessed it to this degree, and with Vivekananda it was part of the very essence of his religion. His God was no less than all the living beings, and every living being ought therefore to be free to develop. One of the most ancient Upanishads says: "Whatever exists in this universe, is to be covered with the Lord." And Vivekananda explained this in the following manner:

"We have to cover everything with the Lord Himself, not by a false sort of optimism, not by blinding our eyes to the evil, but by really seeing God in everything, in good and evil, in sin and the sinner, in happiness and misery, in life and in death. If you have a wife it does not mean that you are to abandon her, but that you are to see God in your wife. He is in her, in you, in your child. He is everywhere."

It is out of this sentiment that his philosophy was born—the philosophy which declared emphatically that "Each Soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divine within, by controlling nature external and internal. This is the whole religion, all else—doctrines or dogmas, or rituals or books, or temples or forms—are but secondary details."

The constructive genius of Vivekananda may be summed up in two words: equilibrium and synthesis. He embraced all the paths of the spirit; the four Yogas in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action from the most spiritual to the

most practical. Indeed, he was, as Romain Rolland says, the personification of the harmony of all human energy. But there looms large at the background of it the harmonious personality of Ramakrishna who had resolved all the dissonances of life in to a superb harmony. And hence the work and the thought of the great disciple was all carried under the Sign of Ramakrishna. His own description of his Master is unique and worth quoting here in order to understand his philosophy more clearly and comprehensively:

"The time was ripe for one to be born, who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Shankara and the wonderfully expansive infinite heart of Chaitanaya; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the downtrodden, for everyone in this world, inside India or outside India; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sects, not only in India but outside of India, and bring a marvellous harmony. The time was ripe, it was necessary that such a man should be born...and I had the good fortune to sit at his feet. He came, the living spirit of the Upanishads, the accomplishment of Indian sages, the sage for the present day...the harmony."

Vivekananda wanted to extend this harmony to the whole of India and the world. He was bathed in this harmony and this is why his universal soul was rooted in its human soil; and the smallest pang suffered by its inarticulate flesh sent a repercussion through the whole tree. He expressed his philosophy in a peculiar phrase which was uttered for the first time in India by him and that phrase made the deepest impression on the intellectuals of his time. That famous phrase: *Daridra-Narayana*

(the beggar God) has since revolutionised the whole concept of our philosophy. "The only God that exists, the only God in whom I believe.....my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races." It may justly be said that India's destiny was changed by that phrase and the impact of it was felt when the teachings of Swami Vivekananda re-echoed throughout India. "Begin by giving your life to save the life of the dying, that is the essence of religion." Ramakrishna realised the truth and handed it over to Vivekananda to give practical shape to it, so that humanity might realise the great truth of the Vedanta through life and make it a living truth in family and social life. As already pointed out, originally an intellectual agnostic with a heart endowed with true seeking and love, Vivekananda saw the living image of Wisdom and Love in Ramakrishna. Vivekananda got his illumination direct from his Master who stirred up spiritual dynamism in him and made him realise the truth of the Divine in the Self and of the Self in the Divine. Vivekananda evaluated all spiritual experiences as vouchsafed unto him through the grace of his Master, and finally came to realise the sublimity, the truth and the majesty of the Self as superior to all experience and the most potent of all facts. It is however significant to note that Vivekananda did not lay much stress upon the metaphysics of the Vedanta nor upon the speculative thinking which can only give us systems but not that spirit and insight which can make us stand before the face of Silence. His teachings have, therefore, an appeal to life. He was a prophet of life, and philosophy to him had a value in life in so far as it helped the finest living and the greatest realisation. Vivekananda was not responsive merely to the sunny side of life but also to its dark side and the

suffering humanity needed a man like him who could weep at the distress of the poor and who could at the same time serve the poor. He saw God in every human being and his heart would weep for the poor, the weak, the down-trodden, and for everyone in this world. At the same time his brilliant intellect could conceive of such noble thoughts as could harmonise all conflicting sects of the world and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart, into existence. He realised as none could during his time, the universal spirit in religion which accounts for his sympathy for the poor and the down-trodden. He spent the last drop of his blood for the weak and the trodden, and emphasised service to them. To serve them was to serve *Narayana*. He felt for the teeming masses of India. He was anxious to impart the touch of love and life to everybody.

The quintessence of Vivekananda's religious creed may be summed up in the following words uttered by him: "The Abstract Advaita must become living-poetry in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms, and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child can grasp it. That is my life's work." The appeal of Vivekananda's philosophy was irresistible and it was all the more so when he declared that the truth of the Vedanta need not remain confined to any limited circle, he at the same time invited and inspired everybody to accept it, saying:

"Therefore these conceptions of the Vedanta must come out, must remain not only in the forest but they must come out to work at the Bar and the Bench, in the pulpit and in the cottage of the poor man, with the fisherman that they are catching fish and the students they are studying. They call to every one, woman and

child whatever be their occupation, whatever they may be...in all the three systems of Dualism, Non-Dualism and Qualified Dualism we find the gradual working up of the human mind towards higher and higher ideals till everything is merged in that wonderful unity which is reached in the Advaita system."

It was this outlook on life and religion that appealed to Miss Margaret Noble more than anything else when she accepted Vivekananda as her guide and Master.

4

THE GURU AND THE DISCIPLE

Miss Margaret Noble came to India at the end of January, 1898. She was introduced to his fellow-Sannyasins at Belur by her Master, Swami Vivakananda. Everybody was full of admiration for this Irish lady. They saw a tall, robust woman in the very prime of life. Her face in repose was almost plain. The cheek bones were high and the jaws were square. The face at the first glance expressed energy and determination, but one would have hardly looked at it again but for the forehead and the eyes. The eyes were a calm, deep blue, and literally lit up the whole countenance. The forehead was broad rather than high over which flowed the abundance of brown hair. In animation the face and its expression were transfigured, in sympathy with the rich, musical voice. In fact, everyone was charmed with her appearance as well as with her dignified personality. And, in course of time, after the fellow-Sannyasins of Swami Vivekananda came to be intimately acquainted with her, they discovered in this Irish lady the proud and spotless sum of womanhood. Her manners and dealings and her devotion to India and everything Indian, pleased them more than anything else. A rare combination of superb intellect and sweet devotion, Miss Margaret Noble was soon able to win their heart and as time went by,

they fully realised the truth of Vivekananda's remark about this disciple whom he often described as "the fairest flower of his work in England." Indeed Nivedita was so.

Three more foreign ladies also came to India at this time at the call of Swami Vivekananda and they became his disciples. They were Miss Henrietta Muller from London and Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod from America. In March Margaret Noble was initiated to the vow of Brahmacharya and the name *Nivedita* (the Consecrated or the Dedicated One) was given to her by her Master. It was on this occasion that she received the following blessing from her Master:

"The mother's heart, the hero's will
The sweetings of the southern breeze
The sacred charm and strength that dwell
On Aryan altars, flaming fire;
All these be yours and many more
No ancient soul could dream before—
Be thou to India's future son,
The mistress, servant, friend in one."

London was left behind for ever and she left behind all her dear and near ones for good and henceforth it was India and the people of India that claimed the full attention and service of Nivedita. The first year at Belur was spent in close association with her Guru and it was during this period that she learnt so many things about India directly from Vivekananda. The *Math* was transferred in February 1898 from Alambazar to Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house on the western bank of the Ganges in the village of Belur. Swami Vivekananda was chiefly engaged at this time in two important works: construction of Belur Math and in the training of his own disciples, chiefly Western, in the moulding of their

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character so as to enable them to carry into practice his plans for the regeneration of the nation. It must be mentioned here that in the early part of the year 1898, the Swami purchased a large tract of land, about fifteen acres in extent, together with a building on the bank of the Ganges at Belur, for a big sum, most of which was donated by Miss Henrietta F. Muller, his devoted friend and admirer. Cottages were built on the newly purchased Math grounds to provide accommodation for his Western disciples which then included Nivedita, Mrs. Ole Bull or Dhiramata as she was then known in the Ramkrishna-Vivekananda Order, and Miss Josephine MacLeod. It was the magnificent munificence of Mrs. Bull which put the monastery at that time on a sound financial basis, much to the relief of Vivekananda.

Among the many events of these days one was the initiation of Miss Margaret Noble into the vow of Brahmacharya at the hands of her Master on a Friday which happened to be the Christian Feast of the Annunciation. As already described, she had first met the Swami in London and had regularly attended his classes and lectures and had imbibed more and more of that great Vedanta spirit and as a result she had decided to devote her life to the service of India and the Swami's work. As illustrating a vital point in the Swami's character, and the ideal he put before those whom he made his own, the Sister herself gives to her readers a peep into the nature of the dedication ceremony in these words:

"May one of them never forget a certain day of consecration, in the chapel at the monastery, when, as the opening step in a lifetime, so to speak, he first taught her to perform the worship of Siva, and then made the whole culminate in an offering of flowers at the feet of the Buddha! 'Go thou,' he said, as if addressing, in one

person each separate soul that would ever come to him for guidance, 'and follow Him who was born and gave His life for others FIVE HUNDRED TIMES, before He attained the vision of the Buddha!'"

This ceremony was in many respects a momentous event, as the Sister was the first Western woman novice received into any monastic order in India. Another event equally significant of the increasing contact, under the guidance of the Swami, between the West and the East, was the receiving of the European lady disciples in audience by the Holy Mother, the spouse of Sri Ramakrishna, an orthodox lady of the highest rank. The audience was touching. She addressed her visitors, as "My children." Nivedita since then was very much attracted to Sarada Devi who also came to regard her as her own daughter calling her affectionately 'Khuki'.

A few days after her initiation, Nivedita was publicly introduced to the citizens of Calcutta by her own Guru at a meeting at the Star Theatre which was presided by Vivekananda himself. Nivedita spoke on "The Influence of Indian Spiritual Thought in England." The Swami spoke briefly on the subject. In introducing the lecturer he spoke of Nivedita as "another gift of England to India." Nivedita was hailed with applause when she addressed the audience as "My dear friends and fellow-countrymen". She said that she felt in coming to India she had come to her home, not only of spiritual enlightenment and religious wisdom, but the dwelling-place of their own kindred.

One sees Vivekananda henceforth making constant efforts to bring about a deep and comprehensive understanding of the Hindu culture in the mind of Nivedita, by imparting definite training to her. The training, however, was not in the long run confined to Nivedita alone, for through the facile pen of Sister Nivedita, the ideas she

received were transmitted to numerous Western and Eastern readers. Through her writings the more learned and scholarly aspects of the Swami's message to India as a whole were likewise heralded broadcast. And the ideas which Vivekananda communicated in these days to his European followers gave tremendous impetus, through Sister Nivedita, to the development of a national consciousness.

While at Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house, the Swami was wont to frequent to the river-side cottage of his European disciples including Nivedita, even spending hours daily with them. Here under the trees he would reveal to them the deepest secrets of the Indian world, pertaining to its history, its folk-lore, its caste, custom and race. The ideals and realities of Indian religions were interpreted to them in such vivid, poetic and dramatic colours that, "In fact, India herself became, as heard in him. As the last and noblest of Puranas, uttering itself through his lips," though it was true at the same time that whatever the subject of his conversation, "it ended always on the note of the Infinite." He showed no mercy to his Western disciples in their wrong notions and prepossessions with regard to India. He would soften nothing in Hinduism which might at first sight be difficult or repellent to the European mind; he would rather put before them such things in their extreme form, and compel them to enter into their spirit and apprehend their meaning. The most difficult task for the Western disciples was, naturally, the understanding of the Hindu religious ideals and forms of worship, and the Hindu outlook on life. And the Swami would talk for hours, straining his mind and putting his whole heart in the effort to elucidate them. Carried on by his burning enthusiasm, Nivedita at once caught glimpses of the background of the Hindu thought symbols, so strange to

her, and learnt the great outstanding watchwords and ideals of the Indian striving, till they become her very own. Truly, in the Swami, East and West were made one. And in the end his Eastern and Western disciples mingled freely in thought and life. But the distance to be travelled was enormous. The process required a tremendous shifting of personality, and for Nivedita to acquire consciously the culture to which the Indian disciples were entitled by birth, it necessitated a complete self re-orientation,—and the presence of a master mind. And Vivekananda was infinitely patient. He never showed the slightest irritation at interruptions in the flow of his conversation, however frequent and irrelevant they might be, for he knew perfectly well the difficulties that confronted them.

A biographer of Vivekananda writes in this connection:

“The training of his Western disciples who came to India was of momentous concern to Swami Vivekananda as a spiritual teacher and as a great Hindu. He knew that a grave responsibility rested upon him. He knew that for them, coming into close contact with the Indian people in their homes, seeing their manners and habits of dress and food and thought, and realising the material disadvantages of the land and its limitations, would be a crucial test of their faith in and regard for the Vedanta and of their power to further fathom the Hinduism he had preached. But he did not know perhaps that the strangest revelation to them was he himself. In the West he was a religious messenger, an apostle of Hinduism, his sole mission being to voice forth the spiritual message, the eternal wisdom of the far past. His only longing was the liberation of mankind from ignorance and the promotion of a brotherly feeling between different faiths and nations of the world. In India he was more a patriot,

a worker for the regeneration of his motherland, with all the struggle and torture of a lion caught in a net. Forced to live a comparatively retired life in the monastery, he put his whole soul to the task of making workers carry out his plans and ideas. And among the Western disciples he particularly chose one in whom he had great hope and trust; as such his illuminating discourses were mainly directed to her. If he had done nothing during this period other than the making of Sister Nivedita, he could not be said to have spent the year in vain."

This naturally reminds us what Vivekananda wrote to Sister Nivedita on the eve of her departure from London, "I will stand by you unto death, whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta, or remain in it. The tusks of the elephant come out, but they never go back. Even so are the words of a man." And what Guru ever loved his disciple with a greater love than did he his spiritual daughter, Nivedita!

The idea of training up Nivedita was always uppermost in the Swami's mind since her arrival in India. In his talks at the river-side cottage at Belur with the Western disciples he instilled into their minds the Indian consciousness, for he felt that a European who was to work on his behalf for India, must do so absolutely in the Indian way, strictly observing Hindu manners, customs and etiquette even to the minutest detail. Such a one, Vivekananda demanded, must adopt the food, clothes, language and general habits of the Hindus and he held up before one of them who was to take charge of the education of Hindu women, the life of Brahmacharya of the orthodox Brahmin widow as her model, only enlarging the scope of her activities by substituting the selfless service to the Indian people for the loving service to the family. Vivekananda was an

exacting Guru and he made a supreme demand from her dearest disciple, Nivedita, in the following words:

"You have to set yourself to Hinduise your thoughts, your needs, your conceptions and your habits. Your life, internal and external, has to become all that an orthodox Brahmin Brhmacharini's ought to be. The method will come to you, if only you desire it sufficiently. But you have to forget your own past and to cause it to be forgotten. You have to lose even its memory."

Certainly this was an arduous task, a fiery ordeal, so to say. And so far as Nivedita is concerned, there was no hesitation, no questioning about it. But this was not all. Vivekananda went one step further and demanded of his disciple that she should evince a living interest in everything connected with the people of his land and he would not tolerate anything against them. He would turn upon her if she was guilty of stupid criticism. He demanded that she should come to the task of the understanding of India without prepossessions and with sincerity, and that India must be understood in the light of the spiritual vision. He upset any notion that she might have had as to his country being either old or effete, and he often said that only a youthful nation could so readily have assimilated the ideals of a foreign culture. He made her see India, in the light of its ideals and ideas, as young, vital and powerful, as one through its religious vision. He made her see that India's culture was incomparable, being developed through thousands of years of trial and experimentation till it had attained the highest standard ever reached by humanity, and consequently possessed an unshakable stability and strength. He made her see the why of every Indian custom. And she saw that though India was poor, it was clean, and that poverty was honoured in the land where religion was understood to be renunciation, and that here poverty was not necessarily

associated with vice, as it is so often in the West. To Vivekananda everything of India was sacred and wonderful. And, later on, as he wandered with Nivedita and other Western disciples from city to city, from pilgrimage to pilgrimage and from province to province, he would recount to them the glories and the beauties of the land. Vivekananda was anxious that his Western disciples and particularly Nivedita, should make an impartial study of Indian problems. She was not only to see the glories, but also to have especially a clear understanding of the problems of the land and bring the ideals and methods of Western scientific culture to bear upon the task of finding a solution. Often he contrasted the East with the West, showing alternately the advantages and disadvantages of the varied civilisations of the world. In short, he gave her the *spirit* of India and initiated her into its worth and values.

The period of the training of Nivedita along with other Western disciples of Vivekananda, extended over nearly the whole of 1898. It was filled with many humorous as well as solemn hours. The training which Nivedita received, shaped her life irrevocably, and made her an apostle of Hinduism and India. When Nivedita one day asked her Guru: "How can I best serve India?" His answer was, "Love India." And a close study of the life-history of the Sister at once reveals the fact that she followed out all along her life this passionate request of her Guru with sincerity and steadfastness which drew admiration from all quarters and which also endeared her to all the eminent persons of her time with whom Nivedita came in personal contact later on.

Nivedita has beautifully described her early days at Belur in her famous book, *The Master As I Saw Him*:

"It was amongst the lawns and trees of the Ganges-side that I came to know, in a personal sense, the leader

to whose work my life was already given...Here at Belur, and later, travelling in Kumaon and in Kashmir, that I began the study of India, and something also of the home-aspects and relationships of the Swami's own life. Our cottage stood on a low terrace, built on the western bank of the river, a few miles above Calcutta. At flood-tide the little gondola-like boat,—which to those who live beside the Ganges serves the purpose of a carriage, could come up to the very foot of the steps, and the river between us and the opposite village, was from half to three-quarters of a mile broad. A mile or so further up the eastern bank, could be seen the towers and trees of Dakshineswar, that temple-garden in which the Swami and his brothers had once been boys, at the feet of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The house which was in actual use at that time as the Monastery, lay some half mile or so to the south of our cottage, and between us and it were several other garden-houses, and at least one ravine, crossed by a doubtful looking plank made out of half of the stem of a palm tree. To our cottage here, then came the Swami daily, at sunrise, alone or accompanied by some of his brothers. And here, under the trees long after our early breakfast was ended, we might still be found seated, listening to that inexhaustible flow of interpretation, broken but rarely by question and answer, in which he would reveal to us some of the deepest secrets of the Indian world. I am struck afresh whenever I turn back upon this memory, by the wonder as to how such a harvest of thought and experience could possibly have been garnered, or how, when once ingathered, could have come such energy of impulse for its giving forth. Amongst brilliant conversationalists, the Swami was peculiar in one respect. He was never known to show the slightest impatience at interruption. He was addressing. His deepest utterances were heard only in

the presence of such listeners as brought a subtle sympathy and reverence into the circle about him. But I do not think he was himself aware of this, and certainly no external circumstances seemed to have power to ruffle him. Moods of storm and strength there were in plenty; but they sprang, like those of sweetness, from hidden sources; they were entirely general and impersonal in their occasion."

How day after day tutored by her Guru, Nivedita learnt all about Eastern ideals can be best understood in her own words:

"It was here that we learnt the great outstanding watchwords and ideals of the Indian striving. For the talks were, above all, an exposition of ideals. Facts and illustrations were gathered, it is true, from history, from literature, and from a thousand other sources. But the purpose was always the same, to render some Indian ideal of perfection clearer. Nor were these ideals always so comprehensible as might have been supposed. This was a world in which concentration of mind was the object of more deliberate cultivation than even the instincts of benevolence could require, but the time was not yet come in which this was to be argued as for or against India. The attainment of the impersonal standpoint was boldly proposed, in matters personal...Love was love, it was insisted, unless it was 'without a reason,' or without a 'motive', as a Western speaker might have attempted, though perhaps with less force, to express the same idea. Purity and renunciation were analysed untiringly...We were often called upon to understand a thought immeasurably foreign to all our past conceptions of religion, in which sainthood finds expression in an unconsciousness of the body, so profound that the saint is unaware that he goes naked. For, that delicate dis-

crimination of a higher significance in certain cases of nudity, which, in Europe, finds its expression in art, in India finds it in religion. As we, in the presence of a Greek statue, experience only reverence for the ideal of beauty, so the Hindu sees in the naked saint only a glorious and childlike purity...There was one aspiration, however, which was held, in this new thought-world, to be of the same sovereign and universal application in the religious life as that of the concentration of the mind. This was the freedom of the individual soul, including all the minor rights of thought, opinion and action."

At Belur Nivedita came into contact not only with Swami Vivekananda but with others also who then used to inhabit the monastery. And thus she records about the hospitality she received from them:

"But it was not the Swami alone whom we saw at Belur. We were accounted by the monastery as a whole, as its guests. So back and forth would toil the hospitable monks, on errands of kindness and service for us. They milked the cow that gave us our supply, and when the servant whose duty it was at nightfall to carry the milk, was frightened by the sight of a cobra in the path, and refused to go again, it was one of the monks themselves who took his place in this humble office. Some novice would be deputed daily, to deal with the strange problems of our Indian house-keeping. Another was appointed to give Bengali lessons. Visits of ceremony and of kindness were frequently paid us by the older members of the community. And, finally, when the Swami Vivekananda himself was absent for some weeks on a journey, his place was always duly taken at the morning tea-table by some one or another who felt responsible for the happiness and entertainment of his guests. In these and a thousand similar ways, we came in touch with those who could reveal to us the shining

memory that formed the warp, on which, as woof, were woven all these lives of renunciation."

Narrating her experience of a day's routine at the monastery of Belur, Sister Nivedita writes:

"Early in the morning, while it was still dark, the Swami would rise and call the others, singing, 'Awake! Awake! all ye who would drink of the divine nectar!' Then all would proceed to meditation, afterwards drifting almost unconsciously into singing and talking, which would last till noon, or even later. From hymns and chanting they would pass into history. Sometimes it would be the story of Ignatius Loyola; again Joan of Arc, or the Rani of Jhansi; and yet again the Swami would recite long passages from Carlyle's French Revolution...It might perhaps be one or two o'clock when Ramkrishnanda—the cook, house-keeper, and ritualist of the community—would drive them all, with threats, to bathe and eat. But after this, they would again group—again would go on the song and talk, till at last evening had come bringing with it the time for the two hours of Arati to Sri Ramakrishna. As often as not, even this would scarcely break the absorption, again would follow song, and talk of the Master; again would come the trances of meditation...Or on the roof, till long after midnight it might be, they would sit and chant 'Hail Sita Rama!'"

These glimpses of early days at Belur throw considerable light on the methods which the Master adopted to train her spiritual daughter, Nivedita. She learnt here a lot, both about India, her people, their manners and habits as well as certain aspects of the life of her own Guru as revealed to her in this process. Possessed of a modern education that ranked with the most advanced in her own country, it was not difficult for Nivedita to grasp all that were imparted to her by Vivekananda during these days at Belur. It was here that she came to know

more about Sri Ramakrishna in course of her association with her Master and his fellow Sannyasins. This training period also provided her with an opportunity to know some of the prominent personalities of the time in different spheres of social, cultural, educational and political life of Bengal.

The second phase of the training consisted of her wanderings in some places in Northern India accompanied by her Master and other Western disciples. To what extent this journey was instructive to her, has been beautifully recorded by Sister Nivedita herself, which we shall quote presently. At the end of March, 1898, the Swami left Calcutta for a few days' rest at Darjeeling preparatory to the long sojourn. This rest was necessary in view of his health and his physicians insisted that he must take some rest immediately. So he decided to spend a few days first at Darjeeling and then arrange for his next trip accompanied by his disciples. When he was only partially restored to health, news suddenly reached him of the outbreak of plague in Calcutta. He hastened down to the metropolis so that he might be of help to his people who were terror-stricken with new plague-regulations. The outlook in Calcutta was threatening. The people were running away in panic. The Swami grasped the gravity of the situation at once. He was greatly concerned and wanted to start relief operations immediately to help the afflicted. Among his disciples, Nivedita came forward to offer her services in this relief work. It gave considerable impetus to all. Had it not been for Nivedita, the relief work organised by Vivekananda under the auspices of the Mission would not have been so easy and smooth. In fact, Sister Nivedita's splendid relief work during this Calcutta plague won for her wide admiration from all quarters. In this connection we are reminded of what Sir Jadunath Sarkar has said:

"During the first plague epidemic in Calcutta when the people were scared away by the terror of the unknown form of death and scavengers could not be had, Nivedita took a spade in her hand and began to shovel away the filth from the neglected lane in Baghbazar in which she lived. Her example shamed some young men of the locality to join her, and thus an object lesson in civic self-help was taught. That was the incident which first made her known to me."

When the epidemic had passed away, plans were being formed to make a journey to the Himalayas to provide an opportunity for the Western disciples for an intimate study of India and her people. Swamiji first went to Almora via Nainital. In the party were Swami Turiyananda, Niranjananda, Sadananda and Swarupananda, Mrs. Ole Bull, Mrs. Patterson, wife of the American Consul-General in Calcutta, Sister Nivedita and Miss Josephine MacLeod. The journey from Calcutta to Nainital was throughout most interesting and educative to the Swami's companions, particularly to Nivedita. She was very much engrossed to find that through the journey the Master's historical consciousness and love of his country were intensely evident. With passionate enthusiasm he would introduce them one by one to each point of interest as they reached it. As the train passed on and on he related to them the greatness of Pataliputra or Banaras, or the splendours of the old Nawab courts of Lucknow, with such ardour and absorption as to create in the minds of his listeners the impression that they were in the presence of one who had lived and moved and had his very being in his country's past. Indeed, there was not one city on which he did not look with tenderness and of whose history he was unaware. When traversing the Terai, he made them feel that this was like the very earth on which the Buddha had passed

the days of his youth and renunciation in search of the highest truth. Nivedita was particularly charmed to find how easily and effectively the Master could paint in word-pictures his love for the humble Indian peasant folk, his love for broad rivers, spreading forests and mighty mountains, all of which were such vital elements in the culture of his people.

The disciples, hearing these graphic descriptions of the life and soul of India, as they came in poetic or philosophical glimpses, understood now why Vivekananda used to say so frequently: "the very dust of India is holy to me, the very air is holy to me." At last the party reached Nainital. Vivekananda held several conversations here with distinguished residents; in one of these he spoke especially of the illustrious Raja Rammohun Roy, of his breadth of vision and foresight, eloquently emphasizing the three dominant notes of this great teacher's message, his acceptance of the Vedanta, his patriotism and his acceptance of the Hindu and the Mohammedan on an equal footing. This seemed to Nivedita as very significant, for she had found by this time that these were also the dominant factors in the career of her Master.

From Nainital, the party went to Almora. It was here, especially, that Sister Nivedita who was regarded by this time by the Indian people as the spiritual daughter of the Swami, received her great training at the hands of her Master. It was a training which revealed the greatness of the Master as also the enormous difficulty and struggle which confronted the European mind in identifying itself with Indian ideals and Indian culture. Between these two strong personalities a conflict of wills commenced. The Sister's whole mental outlook was aggressively occidental and intensely English. Consequently, almost all along the line of contact between her mind and her Master's, points of distinction were

emphasised; and the Swami, because he wanted to infuse into her, his own passionate love of India, did not spare her. Concerning this period of trial Sister Nivedita speaking of herself writes many years later as follows:

"But with Almora, it seemed as if a going-to-school had commenced, and just as schooling is often disagreeable to the taught, so here, though it cost infinite pain, the blindness of a half-view must be done away. A mind must be brought to change its centre of gravity. It was never more than this; never the dictating of opinion or creed; never more than emancipation from partiality. Even at the end of the terrible experience, when this method, as regards race and country, was renounced, never to be taken up systematically again, the Swami did not call for any confession of faith, any declaration of new opinion. He dropped the whole question. His listeners went free. But he had revealed a different standpoint in thought and feeling, so completely and so strongly as to make it impossible for her to rest, until later, by her own labours, she had arrived at a view in which both these partial presentments stood rationalised and accounted for. But at the time they were a veritable lion in the path, and remained so until she had grasped the folly of allowing anything whatever to obscure to her the personality that was here revealing itself. In every case it had been some ideal of the past that has raised a barrier to the movement of her sympathy, and surely it is always so. It is the worships of one era which forge the fetters of the next.

"These morning talks at Almora then, took the form of assaults upon deep-rooted preconceptions, social, literary, and artistic, or of long comparisons of Indian and European history and sentiments, often containing extended observations of very great value. One characteristic of the Swami was the habit of attacking the abuses of a

country or society openly and vigourously when lie was in its midst. Whereas after he had left it, it would often seem as if nothing but its virtues were remembered by him. He was always testing his disciples, and the manner of these particular discourses was probably adopted in order to put to the proof the courage and sincerity of one who was both woman and European."

His intellectual conflict with Sister Nivedita resulted day after day of a gradual Hinduising, or better said, Indianising of her mind. Vivekananda, however, admired this hesitation on Nivedita's part in accepting foreign ideas; and once, he comforted her with the remark that in his own case he had had a similar fight with his own Master, Ramakrishna, before accepting him. How this constant clash and conflict of sentiments came to an end in peace, may be best told here in the language of the Sister herself:

"And then a time came when one of the older ladies of our party, thinking perhaps that such intensity of pain inflicted might easily go too far, interceded kindly and gravely with the Swami. He listened silently and went away. At evening, however, he returned, and finding us together in the verandah, he turned to her and said, with the simplicity of a child, 'You were right. There must be a change. I am going away into the forests to be alone, and when I come back I shall bring peace.' Then he turned and saw that above us the moon was new, and a sudden exaltation came into his voice as he said, 'See! The Mohammedans think much of the new moon. Let us also with the new moon begin a new life!' As the words ended, he lifted his hands and blessed, with silent depths of blessing, his most rebellious disciple, by this time kneeling before him. It was assuredly a moment of wonderful sweetness of reconcila-

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tion. But such a moment may heal a wound. It cannot restore an illusion that has been broken into fragments."

The Swami's discussions and teachings of these days as recorded by Sister Nivedita, are of great value to his countrymen. Some of these morning talks at Almora have been recorded by Nivedita in her charming little book, "*Notes of Some Wanderings with Swami Vivekananda*," from which we cannot do better than quote the following extracts, which though lengthy, will be found most interesting and instructive:

"The first morning, the talk was that of the central ideals of civilization,—in the West, truth, in the East, chastity. He justified Hindu marriage-customs, as springing from the pursuit of this ideal, and from the woman's need of protection, in combination. And he traced out the relation of the whole subject to the Philosophy of the Absolute.

"Another morning he began by observing that as there were four main castes,—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Sudra,—so there were four great national functions, the religious or priestly, fulfilled by the Hindus; the military, by the Roman Empire; the mercantile, by England today; and the democratic, by America in the future. And here he launched of into a glowing prophetic forecast of how America would yet solve the problems of the Sudra,—the problems of freedom and cooperation,—and turned to relate to a non-American listener, the generosity of the arrangements which that people had attempted to make for their aboriginized.

"Again, it would be an eager *resume* of the history of India or of the Moguls whose greatness never wearied him. Every now and then, he would break out into descriptions of Delhi and Agra. But all the more universal forms of human feeling were open to the Master. In one mood he talked of China as if she were the treasure-

house of the world, and told us of the thrill with which he saw inscriptions in old Bengali characters, over the doors of Chinese temples. Or he might wander as far afield as Italy, 'greatest of the countries of Europe, land of religion and art; alike of imperial organisation and of Mazzini;—mother of ideas, of culture, and of freedom!'

Thus many topics—Akbar, Sahjehan, Shivaji, origin of the Aryans, rift between Brahmins and Kshatriyas and finally Buddha—used to be discussed by Vivekananda and Nivedita simply marvelled at the historical exactness with which the Master dealt with each of them. She was very much struck by the historical sweep of her Master's vision. And it is curious to note that while educating Nivedita, he did not leave out the contemporary period of his country:

"Another day in Almora the Swami talked of the great humanising lives that had arisen in Bengal. Of Rammohun Roy we had already heard from him and now of the Pundit Vidyasagar he exclaimed, 'There is not a man of my age on whom his shadow has not fallen!'

Vivekananda spent about two months in the Almora hills, then he went to Kashmir accompanied by Nivedita and Miss MacLeod only, as guests of Mrs. Ole Bull. The journey from Almora down to the plains through hills covered with almost tropical forests was delightful. "We found ourselves," writes Nivedita, "in the midst of a beautiful valley, ringed round with snow-mountains. This is known as the Vale of Kashmir, but it might be more accurately described, perhaps, as the Vale of Srinagar. The sky above was the bluest of the blue, and the water-road along which we travelled, was also, perforce, blue. Sometimes our way lay through great green tangles of lotus-leaves, with a rosy flower or two, and on each side stretched the fields, in some of which, as we came, they were reaping. The whole was a symphony in blue and

green and white, so exquisitely pure and vivid that for a while the response of the soul to its beauty was almost pain!"

As before, the tutor went on teaching her disciple on topics of history; and many were the discussions in which Vivekananda became so interested that he would sometimes forget all thoughts of food. The topics were extremely varied. Sometimes the subject would be the different religious periods through which Kashmir had passed, especially the period under Kaniskha; again, the morality of Buddhism and the religious imperialism of Asoka, or the history of Siva-worship. Even the conquests of Chenghis Khan and Alexander were not left out; Krishna and Christ were equally discussed. Vivekananda constantly interpreted human life as an expression of God. Social life seemed to be agony with him, so antagonistic was it to the old-time idea of the quiet and self-effacement of the monk. Speaking of these days Sister Nivedita writes:

"The life of the silent ashen-clad wanderer, or the hidden hermit, he thought of, it would now and then seem, as the lover might think of the beloved. At no time would it have surprised us, had someone told us that today or tomorrow he would be gone for ever, that we were now listening to his voice for the last time. He, and necessarily we, in all that depended on him, were as straws carried on the Ganges of the Eternal Will at any moment It might reveal Itself to him as Silence. At any moment life in the world might end for him."

Evidently these lines of the Sister refer to the desire for solitude that swept over her Master at this time. It can be readily understood that, living in the shadow of that great life with a burning passion for the highest, it became evident to Nivedita that solitude and silence are the greatest medium for self-development.

A few days after Vivekananda proceeded to the Cave of Amarnath accompanied only by Nivedita. The pilgrimage of thousands of devotees to the far-away Cave of Amarnath, nestled in a glacial gorge of the Western Himalayas, through some of the most charming scenery in the world, is fascinating in the extreme. Nivedita was struck with wonder at the quiet and orderly way in which a canvas town springs up with incredible rapidity at every halting-place, with its tents of various colours and of all shapes and sizes, with its bazars, and the broad streets running through the middle, and all vanishing as quickly at the break of dawn when the whole army of gay pilgrims set out on the march again. The glow of countless cooking-fires, the ashen-smeared Sadhus under the canopy of their large *Gerua* umbrellas stuck in the ground, sitting and discussing or meditating before their *Dhunies*, the Sannyasins of all orders in their various garbs, the men and women with children, from all parts of the country in their characteristic costumes, and their devout faces, the torches shimmering at nightfall, the blowing of conch-shells and horns, the singing of hymns and prayers in chorus,—all these impressive sights naturally conveyed to Nivedita an idea of the overmastering passion of the race for religion. She also witnessed much to her surprise that her Master observed scrupulously all those customs and rules of conduct befitting a pilgrim. She saw him imbued with the spirit of the pilgrimage, practising all sorts of austerities with devotion and ardour, "eating one meal a day cooked in the orthodox fashion, seeking solitude and silence as far as was possible, telling his beads and devoting much time to his meditation in his tent." Sister Nivedita, by her admirable manners, soon became a general favourite with the pilgrims and received from them "endless touching little kindnesses."

After Amarnath, Vivekananda went alone to see the coloured Springs of Kshir-Bhavani, leaving strict injunctions that no one was to follow him. The trip was over by the middle of October and they all returned to Calcutta. As before, most of the time during the return journey was utilised by the Master in teaching her disciple as many topics as he could. All these teachings, it is needless to mention, contributed in a great measure to bring an altogether new experience in the life of Nivedita. A strange feeling overtook her mind and thought which had just began to harbour a certain intensity of the spiritual life for the rest of her life.

WORK IN INDIA

THE education of women in India was one of the cherished desires of Swami Vivekananda. He had very little time to give practical shape to it, nor there was anybody to whom he could entrust this responsibility. It is for this purpose specially that the Swami had invited Nivedita to come to India and devote to this task for which she was eminently suited. After the training period was over, Vivekananda now thought to utilise Nivedita's services for the education of women. The beginning was to be humble and so he decided to start a girls' school with the Sister in its sole charge.

Before we come to the story of the Nivedita Girls' School, it would not be out of place to discuss briefly Swami Vivekananda's thoughts on education for the women of India. Swami Vivekananda had great ideas about ameliorating the present conditions of the Indian women. The necessity of their education was uppermost in his mind. His great genius therefore always brooded, planned and attempted to express in broad lines actions that would fulfil this need. When he found that his utterances on the Vedanta had attractions enough to make the highly cultured women of the West sacrifice their all on the altar of Truth and Religion, he wondered whether they would not in return for what they received from

India, do something to help their sisters in the far East. And when earnest students of such capacity as Sister Nivedita filled in his ranks, the Swami felt assured that it was possible to do so. Swami Vivekananda felt that the cultural heritage of India that had travelled down the ages as a powerful force and kept the vitality of the people in tact notwithstanding adverse political conditions, needed a re-orientation to suit the spirit of the time, and it was his firm conviction that it could be effected through a re-organisation of our educational system and method and a change of outlook on life. His ideal of education was not therefore the stereotyped pattern that obtains in modern times, but one that would bring out the best and the noblest in men and women, by making them perfect in every way—physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually. Though much had already been done for men at the time, very little was done for the education and enlightenment of women. Their uplift became one of the primary concerns of this modern prophet of India. Explaining his ideas about the nature of the education for women in India, the Swami wrote:

“As in the case of boys, so also in the case of girls, education should help them to manifest the best that is in them and attain their ultimate spiritual destiny, which is perfection. There can be no question of superiority or inferiority between man and woman, for they are complimentary halves of the one Divine Entity though probably the part woman with her preservative instinct will have to play may be more vital as repository of everything good and great in their culture. If they have to play distinct parts, and if education means perfection for life, then it naturally follows that the education for women will have to be of a somewhat different type from that of men, though a great part of the intellectual training may for both be common. This education will

have to be evolved by women themselves, because they know their need better. Education should bring to the need of India great fearless women—women worthy to continue the tradition of Sanghamitra, Lilavati, Ahalya Bai and Mira Bai etc. These are the types of women—that must be produced by any system of education that would be suited to women in India. Our education must provide for the nation efficient women in different spheres of the national life and above all, women who will be able to guard the spiritual heritage which is the life of the nation.”

It was to carry out this plan that Nivedita was sent to Calcutta alone in the beginning of November, 1898. Sarada Devi, the divine consort of Sri Ramakrishna, was then residing in Baghbazar with her community of ladies, mostly of devotional bent of mind. Swamiji wanted that Nivedita should live in company of these women and so she was provided with an empty room in the Holy Mother's house. Let Nivedita tell the rest of the story of her experience in her new abode:

“Had I deeply understood at the time, the degree of social embarrassment which my rashness might have brought, not only upon my innocent hostess, but also on her kindred in their distant village, I could not have acted as I did. At any cost, I must in that case have withdrawn. As it was, however, I imagined caste to be only a foolish prejudice,—which must yield to knowledge,—against some supposed uncleanness of foreign habits and thus cheerfully assuming all the ignorance to be on her side, confidently forced myself upon this Indian lady's hospitality. In the event, fortunately, the Swami's influence proved all-powerful, and I was accepted by society. Within a week or ten days, a house in the close neighbourhood was found for me. But even then, I spent all my afternoons in the Mother's room. And when the

hot weather came, it was by her express command that I returned to her better-arranged house, for sleeping quarters. And then I occupied no room apart, but shared the cool and simple dormitory of the others, with its row of mats, pillows and nets, against the polished red earthenware of the floor."

It was during these days that Nivedita after her close association with Sarada Devi, came to know her very intimately. She was charmed at the simplicity and purity of the Holy Mother. Reverenced by all about her, Sarada Devi's simple life and her unostentatious mode of living exercised a great influence on Nivedita to whom Sarada Devi appeared to be "Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of Indian womanhood." She endeared herself so much to the Mother that henceforward she used to call Nivedita as 'Khooki' (child) and Nivedita very much appreciated this. Later on she wrote:

"But is she the last of an old order, or the beginning of a new? In her, one sees realised that wisdom and sweetness to which the simplest of women may attain. And yet, to myself the stateliness of her courtesy and her great open mind are almost as wonderful as her sainthood. I have never known her hesitate, in giving utterance to large and generous judgment, however new or complex might be the question put before her. Her life is one long stillness of prayer. Her whole experience is of theocratic civilisation. Yet she rises to the height of every situation. She is full of music, all gentleness, all playfulness. And the room wherein she worships, withal, is filled with sweetness. And it must be remembered that as the wife of Sri Ramakrishna, she has had the highest opportunity of personal development that it is possible to enjoy. At every moment, she bears unconscious witness to this association with the great."

Sarada Devi, on the other hand, was all praise for

Nivedita. Her complete self-effacement and self-sacrifice at the altar of Mother India so deeply moved her that she used to say very often that Nivedita, in her previous birth, must have been a daughter of India. She was born in the West only to preach the gospel of Ramakrishna and she was so much devoted to her Guru, Naren, that she has left every thing behind her to consecrate herself in the services of India. The rest of Nivedita's life proved that the Mother's appraisal of her conduct was correct. Truly, she is the daughter of India. At the Holy Mother's residence she came in touch with several orthodox women who were well-versed in the epics, the dramas and the religion of Hinduism, and whose lives were the shining examples of the value and realisation of Hinduism to Nivedita. This was of special advantage to her, and she herself lived the life of a Hindu Brahmacharini and soon became altogether Hinduised.

November 12, 1898, was a memorable day in the life of Nivedita. On the afternoon of this day, the school was started. It was the day of Kali Puja. The city was in illumination and Nivedita, too, wanted to light a lamp in the small house at 17 Bose Para Lane, Baghbazar. It was on the same day, it may be noted here, that the consecration of the Belur Math was performed with due solemnity. In the afternoon, the Holy Mother with her party consisting of Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda and Swami Saradananda, returned to Calcutta to perform that evening, the opening ceremony of the school. At the end of the ceremony, the Holy Mother "prayed that the blessing of the Great Mother of the Universe might be upon the school and that the girls it should train be ideal girls." And of this blessing Sister Nivedita herself has written,—“I cannot imagine a grander omen than her blessing, spoken over the educated Hindu womanhood of the future.”

From his first meeting with Sister Nivedita, Vivekananda had discussed with her at great length about the situation of Indian women, and his plans for the education of Hindu girls. She was well known as an educator in England and as already pointed out, she had come to India expressly to be of service to Indian women. He had talks with her, in a special sense, about his plans for the amelioration of the conditions of the women of his native land. It was understood, during her stay both in Calcutta and Almora, and later during her wanderings with the Master in Kashmir, that at the first opportunity, she would open a girls' school in Calcutta, so as "to make some educational discovery, which would be qualitatively true and universally applicable to the modern education of Indian women" at large. With this in mind, after touring in Northern India with the group of her European companions, Nivedita decided to forget that she was European and came to live with the Holy Mother at the command of her Master who saw her frequently and gave her additional insight into the Indian consciousness and into the nature of work she was going to assume.

Thus the school started. It was named as Nivedita Girls' School. This marked the beginning of her work in India. Swami Vivekananda evinced considerable interest in the affairs of the institution. He gave her perfect liberty in the elucidation of her ideas. She was to be free from collaborators, if she so chose; above all, she might, if she so wished, give her work "a definite religious colour," or even make it sectarian. And thus Nivedita set herself to the task with burning enthusiasm and utmost sincerity, amidst conditions that were nonetheless favourable. Later on she wrote:

"It had been taken for granted from the first, that at the earliest opportunity I would open a girls' school in

Calcutta. And it was characteristic of the Swami's methods, that I had not been hurried in the initiation of this work, but had been given leisure and travel and mental preparation. To myself it was clear that this school, when opened, must at first be only tentative and experimental. I had to learn what was wanted, to determine where I myself stood, to explore the very world of which my efforts were to become a part. The one thing that I knew was, that an educational effort must begin at the standpoint of the learner, and help him to development in his own way. But I had no definite plans or expectations, save to make some educational discovery which would be qualitatively true and universally applicable, to the work of the modern education of Indian women...I begged to be freed from collaborators to be allowed to begin in a small way, spelling out my method; and urging, above all, the necessity of a definite religious colour, and the usefulness of sects. The Swami listened and accepted, and as far as his loyalty went to every wish of mine, in this matter, thenceforth, he might have been the disciple and I the teacher. Only in one respect was he inflexible. The work for the education of Indian women to which he would give his name, might be as sectarian as I chose to make it. 'You wish through a sect to rise beyond all sects!', had been his sole reply to this part of my statement."

To make a beginning, Nivtdita collected a few girls of the neighbourhood, of whom some were married, some were even widows. The school received encouragement from all in the locality and the pure and simple life of the Sister soon endeared her to the ladies around, who came to look on her as one of themselves. About eight months' work and experiment convinced her that any work started by her would not be viewed by them in suspicion and misgivings. Being now assured that

there was further scope of expansion of work, Nivedita closed her school and in June, 1899, left for England accompanied by her Master, with the idea of collecting funds in the West for the future work.

In a letter written from California, dated the 15th February, 1900, Swami Vivekananda assured Nivedita that "money will come for your school, never fear—it has got to come." Again, in another letter written from San Francisco on the 28th March, 1900, Swamiji reaffirms: "I am sure you will get all the money you require here or in England." Sister Nivedita then sailed to America and presented before the Americans her well-thought out and detailed 'Project of the Ramakrishna School for Girls.' While in the States, she was helped a lot by some benevolent Americans among whom most prominent were Mr. & Mrs. Legget. In the early part of 1902 Sister Nivedita returned to India to re-open the school. Swamiji who was in Banaras then, sent her his blessings in a letter dated the 12th February: "May all powers come unto you! May Mother Herself be your hands and mind!...If there was any truth in Sri Ramakrishna, may He take you in His leading, even as He did me, nay a thousand times more!" Nivedita re-opened the school by celebrating the *Saraswati Puja* with great enthusiasm, and with renewed vigour started her work. Practically this time she threw herself heart and soul for the success of the school. And when in the beginning of July, 1902, Swamiji passed away, Nivedita took upon herself this responsibility with greater zeal than before. Since then she considered that this school was a sacred trust bestowed upon her by her Master. After some time Christiana Grunstedt, an ardent American disciple of the Swami, who had come to this country early in 1902, joined the work. Christiana's assistance was of immense help to Nivedita. There was another

Bengali lady whose services were equally helpful for the development of the school. She was Sister Sudhira. When Sister Christiana left for America in 1914 for reasons of health, she entrusted the school to Miss Sudhira Bose who had joined the school as a teacher in 1906. Sudhira was the daughter of Sj. Ashutosh Bose of Hathibagan whose eldest son, Debabrata Bose, was a well-known revolutionary during the early Swadeshi days in Bengal. Afterwards Debabrata joined the Mission and assumed the name as Swami Prajnananda. Sudhira had received education in the Brahmo Girls' School. In 1906 she joined the school as a teacher and during her leisure hours she read English with Sister Christiana. As her work in the school increased, Sudhira left her home and started staying permanently with Sister Nivedita and Sister Christiana at the Bose Para Lane house which was then known as "The House of the Sisters". A small wooden sign board with these words painted on it, hung outside the wall of the school, used to attract a passer-by as he looked at it. Sudhira practically renounced the world and consecrated her life to the cause of educating and serving her Indian sisters. She conducted her work with such energy, tact and resourcefulness from 1914 to 1920 that the school developed rapidly in all directions. Her selfless work drew many new recruits to her side.

Thus at the beginning these three—Nivedita, Christiana and Sudhira—nurtured the tiny Kindergarten School which has now fully developed into a big institution. Nivedita's dream was to evolve the right kind of education suited to the genius and requirement of Indian women. Much of that has been done and is still being done. Today none of them—Nivedita, Christiana and Sudhira—exist, but the ideal and its inspiration have not ceased to enkindle the succession of workers who have come and served the school. The school celebrated its

golden jubilee in 1952. On the occasion of that celebration every one who participated in it, recalled once again a deep sense of reverence and gratitude to Sister Nivedita who slowly nourished the institution with her life-blood into a great centre of culture and education for Indian women. Thus it can be said that the Nivedita Girls' School stands as a monument to Sister Nivedita's integrity and labour in the field of women's education in our country.

Among the numerous messages received on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the School, one is worth quoting here. This message came from Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-President, Republic of India: "Among those who worked for interesting our countrymen in the greatness of our own culture, Sister Nivedita occupies a prominent place. I hope her life and work will inspire the girls who are trained in the school."

On the morning of the 28th June, 1902, as Nivedita was just coming out of her house at 17 Bose Para Lane, Baghbazar—she saw Swami Vivekananda accompanied by two monks approaching towards the door. "Glory to the Guru", said Nivedita saluting her Master as a Divine guest. He entered the humble dwelling alone, touched the posts of the shed, the threshold of the door, the walls of dried earth, the stem of the fig tree, which from the courtyard projected its foliage over the top of a narrow lane leading to the habitation of Sarada Devi. Then he went up into the upper room on the first floor and set himself down on the spread out deer skin. The skin was the very same as he had used for some years for meditation, of which he had a few days previously made a gift to Nivedita.

"I like this house", he declared at length, "it is favourable for your work. Never forget to adore the smallest child, because true greatness is hidden in the



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little worm." During all this talk he was toying with the polished earthen miniature figures which Nivedita had collected for her future pupils, and he became enthusiastic at discovering in a box, yet unpacked, a magic lantern and a microscope. "Come to Belur tomorrow morning," said he, "I should like you to explain your plan of work to the entire college of Monks." This was more than Nivedita had even expected. At the moment when the Master quitted her house with a feeling of joy at the work accomplished, she wished a prayer: "Swamiji, the day when the school will open its gates, will you come to bless it?" He smiled making a vague sign. With that sweet voice of his, with which she had been acquainted all these years, he said, touching her shoulder, "My blessing is always on you." Four days had passed since the visit of the Swamiji when Nivedita felt the urgent necessity of seeing her Master again. She left for Belur although she knew that she was not expected there. That Wednesday was *Ekadashi*—the eleventh day of the moon, which according to Hindu customs, is consecrated to fasting and prayer. As soon as Swamiji learnt Nivedita's arrival, he made her come up close to him. What a surprise was this visit! In front of Swamiji, Nivedita knew why she had come. Himself observing the prescribed fast, Swamiji wanted a repast prepared for Nivedita. Vegetable curries, rice, fruits, curdled milk were brought in bowls of marble. In spite of Nivedita's opposition, Swamiji took pleasure in serving her. He was playful and grave at the same time, mixing happy memories with the particular solemnity of the repast. When it was over, at the moment when Nivedita made the sign to get up in front of the novice who was bringing the jug of water and linen to wash the hands, the Master took hold of them. He stooped towards the Sannyasini, and slowly, without saying anything, he bent and poured out the

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water perfumed with mint on the hands which she held out. Confounded, Nivedita stammered, "Master, it is me who should be in your place, and you in mine". An empty smile on his lips, Swamiji engrossed in his task, murmured, "Jesus washed the feet of his disciples". "Yes it is true, yesterday..." These words halted on her lips. She closed her eyes. Swamiji uttered a Mantra of benediction. She felt on her his look which was full of loving kindness.

This account has been touchingly recorded by Nivedita herself in *The Master As I Saw Him* in the following manner:

"As the end came nearer, meditation and austerity took up more and more of his life. Even those things that had interested him most, elicited now only a far away concern. And in the last hour, when the supreme realisation was reached, some ray of its vast super-conscious energy seemed to touch many of those who loved him, near and far.....He made one more journey, lasting through January and February 1902, when he went, first to Bodh-Gaya and next to Banaras. It was a fit end to all his wanderings. He arrived at Bodh-Gaya on the morning of his last birth-day, and nothing could have exceeded the courtesy and hospitality of the Mohunt. Bodh-Gaya was the last, as it had been also the first, of holy places he had set out to visit...Many of his disciples from distant parts of the world gathered round the Swami on his return to Calcutta. Ill as he looked, there was none, probably, who suspected how near the end had come.

"When June closed, he knew well enough that the end was near. 'I am making ready for death,' he said to one who was with him, on the Wednesday before he died. 'A great *tapasya* and meditation 'has come upon me, and I am making ready for death.'

"And we who did not dream that he would leave us, till at least some three or four years had passed, knew nevertheless that the words were true.....this had corresponded so well with the prophecy of Sri Ramakrishna—that when he should know who and what he was, he would refuse to remain a moment longer in the body.

"On Wednesday of the same week, the day being *Ekadashi*, and himself keeping the fast in all strictness, he insisted on serving the morning meal to the same disciple (Nivedita). Each dish as it was offered, formed the subject of playful chat; and finally, to end the meal, he himself poured the water over the hands and dried them with a towel. 'It is I who should do these things for you Swamiji! Not you for me!' was the protest naturally offered. But his answer was startling in its solemnity—'Jesus washed the feet of His disciples!' Something checked the answer 'But that was the last time!' as it rose to the lips, and the words remained unuttered. This was well. For here also, the last time had come. There was nothing sad or grave about the Swami, during these days."

Then, recording the death of her Master, Nivedita writes:

"None was prepared, least of all on that last happy Friday, July the 4th, on which he appeared so much stronger and better than he had been for years, to see the end so soon. He had spent hours of that day in formal meditation. Then he had given a long Sanskrit lesson. Finally he had taken a walk from the monastery gates to the distant high road. On his return from this walk, the bell was ringing for evensong, and he went to his own room, and sat down, facing towards the Ganges, to meditate. It was the last time. The moment was come that had been foretold by his Master. Half an hour went by, and then, on the wings of that meditation,

his spirit soared whence there could be no return, and the body was left, like a folded vesture, on the earth."

Nivedita was not present when her Master died. The message of his passing away was sent to her next morning at her Baghbazar residence through a special messenger from the Belur Math. The message ran thus: "My dear Nivedita, the end has come yesterday. Swamiji fell asleep at nine o' clock in the night, no more to awake. Saradananda." It was a bolt from the blue for Nivedita. The news of the death of her Master simply stunned her. For a few moments she could not speak. Hurriedly she followed the messenger and arrived at the monastery. Already the news of Vivekananda's death had spread far and wide and when Nivedita arrived, the Math was full of people from far and near. Sadness reigned everywhere. The body lay in state in the room which only a day or two ago rang with the laughter and stirring eloquence of the inspired monk. Hundreds passed before the body in solemn silence, their eyes debating whether he was dead. Slowly Nivedita came upstairs and sat beside the lifeless form of her Master. There was no tear on her eyes. She lifted his head on her lap and began to fan the body with a palmleaf fan. Towards the afternoon the body was brought downstairs to the porch in front of the courtyard. There on a cot it lay, wrapped in the robes symbolic of poverty of the Sannyasin. The funeral pyre was built on the very spot near the Ganges where the Swami himself had desired his body to be cremated. Taken in a procession, the body was finally placed upon the funeral pyre by the monks and devotees. The pyre was then lighted until it was all ablaze. In the deep dusk the flames died down leaving the ashes of the great soul behind.

All this time Nivedita was sitting alone under a tree a little distance away with her mind full of reminiscences

of her Master. "O Swami," prayed she, "do that I may act in life according to your dearest will and not according to mine." Prayers went up in the night. "The monks adore", said she, as she got up, "as for myself, I have not the time, Swamiji has entrusted me with a mission. I must work and watch." All the while, she murmured as she walked. "Lord, Thy will be done." Henceforward Nivedita threw herself heart and soul for the fulfilment of the mission entrusted to her by her Master. Now we shall recount that portion of the story of her life.

6

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HER MASTER

THE mantle of Vivekananda fell upon his adopted daughter Nivedita. She knew that Swamiji had entrusted her with a mission. And henceforth she threw herself heart and soul to the fulfilment of that mission. Certainly the death of Vivekananda in the prime of his life was a great blow to her as it was to India. Yet she had no time to mourn the death of her Master. But quite unexpectedly there came another blow for which Nivedita was least prepared and it came only within two weeks after the death of her Master. The following news appeared in the Amrita Bazar Patrika dated the 19th July, 1902:

"Sister Nivedita—We have been requested by the Ramakrishna Mission authorities to inform the public that at the conclusion of the days of mourning for the Swami Vivekananda, it has been decided between the members of the Order at Belur Math and Sister Nivedita that her work shall henceforth be regarded as free and entirely independent of their sanction or authority."

In plain words this meant that the Mission did not like that the Sister would remain a member of the Order and at the same time she would actively associate herself with other activities which the authorities of the Mission did not like. These 'other activities' of course meant politics chiefly. A nationalist to the core of her heart,

it was quite natural for Nivedita to identify herself with the politics of the renascent India and she was drawn to it more and more even when her Master was alive. Her nationalist tradition made her quickly to identify herself with the cause of India's freedom. As a woman of dynamic personality, Nivedita could never tolerate the least possible encroachment either on her ways of thinking or on her activities and there had already been a number of hitches between the Sister and Swamiji on various occasions. So when this sort of announcement came from the Mission, naturally Nivedita cut herself aloof from the Ramakrishna Mission as she wanted to engage herself in politics.

The first and foremost task that now engaged Nivedita's attention was to preach the gospels of her Master properly, for she felt that with the first flush of mourning being over, the country, specially the youngmen, lacked in enthusiasm about Swamiji. There was still much misunderstanding about Swami Vivekananda. In a public meeting she said: "Swamiji is verily our great national hero." The word 'our' is significant. For it reveals at once that the Sister has by this time fully identified herself with the aspirations of the Indians. To her India was a nation and Vivekananda was the great leader of that nation. She further said: "What was the idea that caught Vivekananda? He saw before him a great Indian nationality, young, vigorous, fully the equal of any nationality on the face of the earth." Here it is also significant to note that she did not declare Vivekananda as a great devotee of Ramakrishna; nor did she claim that he was a great religious reformer of the Hindus. Even she did not say that he was a Sannyasin who had renounced this worldly life. Instead of this, she declared that like other nations of the world, Indians were also a great nation and Vivekananda was their great leader.

Today it is easy to call Vivekananda a leader, but it was not so easy at the time of Nivedita. Her interpretation of Vivekananda is a proof of her foresight. Vivekananda was the be all and the end all of Nivedita and through Vivekananda it was India which primarily claimed her attention and services. Thus in preaching and propagating Vivekananda, Nivedita never lost sight of the man in her Master. She was a devoted disciple but not a blind and emotional follower of her Master and as such she could never conceive to preach Vivekananda as an incarnation which was the prevalent idea among his followers at that time. All that she wanted was to present to the people of India the simple, straightforward and humanitarian Vivekananda who was the leader of the nation. And in her zeal to this task, her next step was to set up a number of 'Vivekananda Societies' throughout the length and breadth of the country, at least in all the important cities. With this end in view, Nivedita first founded in 1902 Vivekananda Society in Calcutta. "What shall be the main duty of Vivekananda Societies?" to this self-question Nivedita herself has replied in the following manner: "It is the man himself that we really need to understand and appreciate; his triumph that we require to realise; his ringing cheer of hope and defiance that we should strive to make our own...Vivekananda had seen most of the countries of the world. And nothing teaches like contrast. This argument is true, and points to the fact that one of the great duties of Vivekananda Societies should be the revival of the enthusiasm for pilgrimages. It is not Kedarnath alone that we see by going there. How much do we not learn of India! How deep do we not go into the passion of the race for their beautiful Himalayas! How much may we not add to our power of thought and feeling by a single visit to Banaras?.....It is of course quite impossible for large numbers of our

youths to go abroad, in order to awaken their own sense of home-characteristics. The real question is, how can we educate ourselves to *understand* the contrasts and affinities between India and other countries? One great means lies in the cultivation of the historical sense. 'Every man,' says Emerson, 'is a quotation from all his ancestors.' Every moment, in like manner, is a compendium of the whole past. We need not devote ourselves to the history of India alone, or even chiefly. To know this, will become an imperious hunger in us, in proportion as our conception of the national process in other lands grows clearer." Thus defining the aims and objects of the Society, Nivedita concludes:

"It is well-known that all great ages dawn with a mighty wave of hero-worship. The enthusiasm that leads to the formation of the Vivekananda Societies themselves is an instance of this. History cannot be entirely philosophical. Let us plunge madly into the worship of great characters. Nothing could be more akin to the Swami Vivekananda's own spirit. He would spend hours in talk of Buddha or Sita or St. Francis or even perhaps of some great personage living at the moment in a foreign land. And he would throw himself into the very soul of the hero, never failing to throw the light of some new and startling interpretation upon character and narrative."

Nivedita's very idea of founding Vivekananda Societies at the important intellectual centres of India, at once show that with the death of her Master she assumed the role of awakening the nation. Thus she wanted first to tackle the question that Vivekananda tackled. This also reveals another trait of the relation between a Guru and a disciple as laid down by our scriptures. It has been well said that the true disciple is he who is caught heart and soul by the idea that caught his master, and proceeds to work it out, in ways that the master never thought of

and might not even have approved. What was the idea that caught Vivekananda? He saw before him "a great Indian nationality, young, vigorous, fully the equal of any nationality on the face of the earth." To him, according to Nivedita, this common nationality—conscious of its own powers, and forcing their recognition on others, moving freely forward to its own goal in all worlds, intellectual, material, social, occupational—was the "firm establishment of the national righteousness (*dharma*)" for which those who love him believe undoubtingly that he was born.

By the beginning of September 1902, Nivedita left Calcutta to fulfil the task of awaking the nation according to the ideals of her Master. She travelled a number of places; places such as Bombay, Poona, Nagpur, Bodh-Gaya; to the north she went up to Lahore and to Hyderabad in the west. From there she went to Baroda where she met for the first time Aurobindo Ghosh about whom she had already heard much. Aurobindo himself was equally eager to meet this fiery woman upon whom the mantle of Swami Vivekananda had fallen. It should be noted here that just at this time Aurobindo, then a professor of English in the Baroda Raj College, had associated himself with the terrorist activities of Guzerat whose guiding leader was the famous revolutionary, Thakur Sahib. He was then away to Japan and it was during Thakur Sahib's absence that Aurobindo was acting as the president of the terrorist party. A born revolutionary as he was, Aurobindo had already developed a strongly pro-Indian and anti-British bias. Viewed from a historical standpoint, what was most significant in the life of Aurobindo in Baroda was his grounding in patriotism and initiation into revolutionary activities. The writings of Vivekananda made a strong impression upon him, although the influence of Ramakrishna was far more profound and abiding. It

is true that spirituality attracted Aurobindo more than anything else. At the same time he knew that spirituality was not something worth pursuing without first endeavouring for the political freedom of India. Thus his patriotism was apiece with the Indian renaissance that was struggling hard to find its ancient soul and express it in new terms and with vigour as was required by the modern age.

A number of patriotic spirits had expressed their love of India in different ways since the middle of the nineteenth century. Many of them had had no occasion to come into direct conflict with the British, but their love of India and the Indian people was no less genuine. Along with social and religious reform, they had a strong desire for India's freedom and expressed this desire in terms which were far from ambiguity when occasion arose. Of Raja Rammohun Roy, the earliest of the early giants, it was said, "He would be free or not to be at all...Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul." If patriotism means love of India, the Indian people, the Indian way of life, together with a strong desire for the political freedom of India then Rammohun, Vivekananda, Dayananda were certainly great patriots. They valued the freedom of India as much as those who actually fought in the political field, though their main task lay in fields other than those of politics. All shared in evoking a love of India in the hearts of the young and old of their own generation. It is no wonder that Aurobindo should feel attracted so much to the patriotic fervour of Vivekananda who had then exhibited remarkable love for India and rendered selfless service in re-awakening his countrymen from the age-old slumber. Aurobindo's admiration for Vivekananda is expressed in very high terms. To him he was not only a prophet and a patriot but a

nation-builder and one of the makers of modern India. By the time Aurobindo met Nivedita, it is definite that his love of India had taken a concrete shape and it is obvious that his political mind during this period was definitely heading towards the ideal of Swaraj or full independence, and with this end in view Aurobindo, it may be mentioned here, took some steps towards organising several revolutionary groups. Those familiar with Aurobindo's life need not be told that it was part of his political work and as was usual with him, done quite noiselessly and without least conspicuity. He chiefly did the work of inspiring and of strengthening the moral fibre of those who wanted to join the revolutionary groups. But nothing of importance was accomplished till 1902 when some attempt to build up an organisation was made. It all began with Jatin Banerji, trained in the Baroda army. Aurobindo sent Jatin to Bengal first to survey the field and then to persuade suitable young men to start revolutionary centres. He himself visited some of the districts of Bengal during his vacations and contacted several likely people. Nivedita had some knowledge of these early revolutionary activities in Bengal. Thus it is evident that she now came to Baroda with the express purpose of contacting Aurobindo in this connection.

So they met—the two arch-revolutionaries who were destined to play distinct roles in the movement which was then in the offing. "I hear you are a worshipper of Shakti," thus accosted Nivedita when she met Aurobindo for the first time. "So are you, I think", was the reply from Aurobindo who had already read Nivedita's booklet, "Kali—The Mother". Then they had other discussions regarding the future plan of action in Bengal. Before departing from Baroda, Nivedita once more reminded Aurobindo: "Calcutta has need of you, your place is in Bengal."

"No. Let me remain in the background. My work is to create men."

"You can count on me," said Nivedita stretching out her hand to Aurobindo. "I am your ally."

In this connection the French biographer of Nivedita writes:

"What a joy did they taste in comparing their philosophical theories, which, although different led them to the same goal. The disciple of Vivekananda was seeking the universe in Maya, teaching men to find himself there in. Was she incomprehensible to Aurobindo Ghose, who, even in the actual form of the world discovered a manifestation of the Divinity. No, for this man with a piercing look was Existence itself, being transformed consciously until it became, in his body a Divine realisation. Nivedita was moved by it."

Thus Aurobindo and Nivedita felt drawn to each other and decided to join their hands and frame the foundations of a long collaboration. They knew themselves to be the artisans of a common work, namely, to drag out India from the magical charm in which she had fallen. From Baroda Nivedita went to Nagpur where she delivered some inspiring lectures. From these lectures it is clear to us that Sister Nivedita was not only an indefatigable champion of the cause of Indian women but also a dauntless and forceful inspirer of the youth of India. Recalling the events of this occasion, Sri G. V. Deshmukh of Nagpur, who had attended some of her lectures and who had also the opportunity of meeting her, records his reminiscences of Sister Nivedita in the following words:

"In the year 1902 Sister Nivedita, the disciple of Swami Vivekananda had come to Nagpur, about the Dasserah time, and delivered spirited lectures here. The Morris College students arranged a ceremony of distribu-

tion of prizes under her presidentship, on the day of *Padhan*—the day before the *Dasserah* day, when arms are worshipped, to such individuals of a cricket team as had done well in a cricket match. The main idea was to create an opportunity to hear her lecture. She distributed the prizes, but took advantage of the opportunity to rebuke the Morris College students for taking pride in playing foreign games and for encouraging these while neglecting their own national games. She even said that she would not have presided over the function if she had known what the function was going to be. It was a day on which arms were worshipped. And Goddess Durga was the presiding deity to be worshipped during the *Dasserah* days. So Sister Nivedita was surprised how we could have forgotten the Goddess Durga and Her sword and also Her Message! She had expected, she said, in this capital of the Bhonsla Rajas, to see on that day something of the bravery of the Marathas...she went on castigating the audience, consisting of college students and professors ...who left the hall with the satisfaction that they had heard a good lecture full of fire and fury, well delivered and with patriotic fervour. Next day Nivedita addressed a few words to the gathering of students and, as far as I remember, she said something to the following effect: 'We are having too much of higher education and too many graduates are turned out of the Universities, who are completely physical wrecks, unfit to protect themselves, their mothers, or their sisters in times of difficulties. Such weaklings can be of no use to society. The country needs robust and patriotic men instead of persons who serves a foreign government and dominate over their countrymen. They alone can uplift the country.'"

After she had visited Nagpur, Nivedita returned to Calcutta for a few days and immediately she dashed to

Madras on receipt of an urgent invitation from there. Here many friends and followers of Vivekananda were eager to meet her. On her arrival there, Nivedita was given a rousing reception which overwhelmed her completely. The Madras people were all admiration for Nivedita. At Madras personal friends of Swami Vivekananda grouped around the chief of Ramakrishna Mission, waited upon her with mixed feelings—some in awe of her because of her courage—all were in a hurry to question her as she had seen the last days of the of the Master. She gave a number of lectures at Mayalapore, Salem, Trichinapolly, Chidambaram. The theme was the same everywhere: the re-awakening of India through nationalism. This she declared was the mission of her Master. She spent some weeks there and was greatly pleased at the architectural beauty of the South Indian temples. Her Madras lectures were fully reported in the "Hindu" and they created a tremendous effect on the minds of the younger section of the people there. She returned to Calcutta on the eve of Christmas and on her way to Calcutta she spent the time at Khandagiri. Here a strange experience came upon her. Recording about this, Nivedita writes in *The Master As I Saw Him*:

"Towards Christmas of the year 1902, a few of the Swami Vivekananda's disciples gathered at Khandagiri near Cuttack to keep the festival. It was evening, and we sat on the grass, round a lighted log, while on one side of us rose the hills, with their caves and carven rocks, and all around us whispered the sleeping forest. We were to keep Christmas Eve, in the old-time fashion of the Order of Ramakrishna. One of the monks held a long crook, and we had with us a copy of the Gospel of St. Luke, wherewith to read and picture the coming of the angels, and the singing of the world's first Gloria.

"We lost ourselves in the story, however, and the reading could not be stopped at Christmas Eve, but must needs drift on from point to point. The Great Life as a whole was passed in review; then the Death; and finally the Resurrection. We turned to the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel, and read incident after incident.....We passed over, that night, at Khandagiri, those features of the Resurrection that would seem to have been added later by minds that believed in the hard and fast, black and white, character of the story...It was not of any reappearances of the body at all, as it seemed to us reading, that this older story had told, but of sudden and unforeseen meetings of the will, returns of thought and love, from One Who had been resumed into His shining Self, and moved now on subtler and more penetrative planes of action than we, entangled amidst the senses, could conceive.

"And yet, and yet, in the midst of the caves and forests of Khandagiri that night, we who followed the Christian story of the Resurrection, could not but feel that behind it, and through it, glistened a thread of fact: that we were tracing out the actual foot-steps left by a human soul somewhere, somewhen, as it trod the glimmering pathway of this fugitive experience. So we believed so we felt, because, in all its elusiveness, a like revelation, at a like time, had made itself evident to us also. May God grant that this living presence of our Master, of which death itself had not had power to rob us, become never, to us his disciples, as a thing to be remembered, but remain with us always in its actuality, even unto the end!"

This then is the six months' account of Nivedita's life after the death of Swami Vivekananda. Now we pass to the rest of the chapters of her life which knew no rest, which was afraid of nothing and which only wanted to fulfil itself in terms of the ideals of her Master.

7

WORK FOR FREEDOM

THE beginning of 1903 finds Nivedita at Calcutta engaged in works other than her school. By this time not only her name had spread all over India, most of the eminent persons of the period claimed her acquaintance and friendship and in some cases, her active association. Thus Nivedita came to know the social, political, cultural and educational trends of the country and in every sphere she was indispensable. By and by Nivedita became an institution by herself and thus she could attract at her narrow Bose Para Lane residence the poet, the statesman, the educationist, the scientist, the social worker as well as the terrorist. Her abode became a centre of inspiration to the young Bengal. But we will relate that story later on.

So Nivedita returned to Calcutta. While she spent the Christmas at Khandagiri, the eighteenth session of the All India Congress was being held at Ahmedabad and Surendranath Banerjee was the president of the session. Now the reaction of her Madras speeches on the authorities of the Belur Math was nonetheless favourable. The Hindu press gave an account of her speeches from day to day. It did not leave any doubt about her growing popularity, so much so that the authorities of the Belur monastery grew very much alarmed at it. One day Swami

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Brahmananda, the then President of the Math, sent for Nivedita and asked her point-blank to give up her political activities if she wanted to remain associated with the Mission. Naturally Nivedita could not comply with this request. She conferred long with Swami Brahmananda. In one accord the monks asked her, in the name of her vow of obedience, to renounce all political campaigns. Was not her educational work, still in its difficult beginning, a sufficient activity for her? If Swami Vivekananda had combined the austere asceticism of a yogin with the fiery temperament of a patriot, it was an attitude which was essentially personal, which was not in any case to gush out the newly created Institution. A monastic order established on the principle of renunciation of the world could not plunge into a fight, whatever that was. Then, to celebrate Vivekananda as did Nivedita, was to impose a continuous menace on the Monastery. What if the English Government took umbrage at her inflammatory words, and the work of the Master disappeared?

Nivedita listened and categorically refused, "I cannot act otherwise", said she to Swami Brahmananda, "I have identified myself with this idea and I would rather die than abandon it."

The firmness of her expression was significant. It was intolerable to think, once more in her life, that an association, if not a church, should dictate her conduct to her. Upon this Swami Brahmananda requested her to make an open statement in the newspaper stating that she was leaving the Ramakrishna Mission of her own accord. It was done and in January, 1903, there appeared in the columns of the *Statesman* 'An Open Letter' under the signature of Nivedita declaring that she has separated herself from the Math voluntarily. There only remained some question of detail, of money accounts—they were

quickly regulated. Of all the sums collected, Nivedita reserved only to herself the current annuity which was strictly necessary for the up-keep of her establishment at Baghbazar and gave back to the abbot all she possessed, about four hundred pound sterling. Being free, Nivedita prepared to confront poverty; she wished it whole. These grave problems thus resolved, Nivedita could without impediment consecrate herself actively to her political work.

Thus a curtain was drawn on an important episode of her life. In this connection one is naturally reminded of a letter which Vivekananda wrote to Nivedita on the eve of her departure for India. Thus writes Nivedita:

"He afterwards wrote to me on the eve of my departure, 'I will stand by you whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta, or remain in it. The tusks of the elephant come out, but they never go back. Even so are the words of a man'."

Thus even though she separated herself from the monastery, Nivedita could never think of separating herself from her Master; otherwise long after this incident while writing the reminiscences of her life Nivedita could not quote with emphasis her Master's words: "I will stand by you unto death." Moreover, though the Math renounced her, Nivedita at once found an warm abode in the heart of Mother India, which claimed her services henceforth in all spheres of our national awakening.

Momentous things happened in Bengal after Vivekananda's demise in 1902. A concatenation of circumstances made Sister Nivedita meet Aurobindo Ghose in Baroda who communicated to him the political trends in Bengal. This was followed by Aurobindo's visit to Calcutta. The nucleus of the revolutionary movement was started there. The Executive Committee of the revolutionary society

that was established at Calcutta, had among its five members, Aurobindo and Nivedita as well. This society in Bengal was connected with the "Secret revolutionary society" established in Maharastra by Tilak and his associates. During this time Nivedita used to deliver fiery lectures on Hindu social polity which were as much inspiring as they were instructive. One day she delivered a lecture at the Town Hall and the subject of her lecture was "Dynamic Religion". On hearing this, Bipin Chandra Pal exclaimed: "It is not dynamic religion, but dynamite!" Then she wrote a booklet called, "Aggressive Hinduism" in which Nivedita said that, "Hinduism has become aggressive again." Indeed, her ideologies on the political aspirations of India during this critical period of her history, was the ideologies of Swami Vivekananda. She never deviated from it. Her interpretation of India was the interpretation of Swamiji. Verily, she might be called his political heir.

Nivedita donated about one hundred and fifty volumes out of her own personal collection to the first secret society formed in Bengal. All those books related to the history of Irish National Movement, French Revolution, History, biography etc. She wanted the young men to read and know about the political history of other countries in Europe and thus Nivedita desired to build a band of political missionaries who would fight for the freedom of India to the last drop of their blood. Mazzini's autobiography, lent by Sister Nivedita was the "Bible" of these budding political missionaries, mostly drawn from the middle class.

Nivedita would sometimes ask these young men: "Your mission is noble; but are you prepared to sacrifice your lives for your country?" The boys would reply: "If you are a Joan of Arc, then we must follow you; allow us to march behind you."

"India has her leaders as Italy had Cavour and Mazzini", said she, "the leaders who belong as well to humanity as to a single country. But India cannot use the means employed by Italy; all the conditions are different here."

Incessant work under conditions nonetheless encouraging very soon told upon Nivedita's health. She was advised by some of her friends to take a few days' rest in a hill climate to recoup her health to which she readily agreed. So Nivedita decided to go to Darjeeling in the summer of 1903 where most of her political friends including Gokhale were then residing. Nivedita had a very high regard for Mr. Gokhale to whom she wrote in March, 1902: "You must not forget for an instant the great value which I attach to your work." It may be curious to know how the affinity grew between Nivedita and Gokhale who was a moderate of the first order while the former was an arch-revolutionary. Evidently they were strange bed-fellows, but the special genius of Nivedita could achieve impossible and it was only she who had free access in all the camps, left or right, moderate or extremist. It was during this year (1903) that the Delhi Durbar was held with all imperial pomp and splendour and much to the chagrin of the poverty-stricken people of India. Educated India also protested against this expensive show, but all in vain. Even a civilian like Ramesh Chandra Dutta had to remark: "The Durbar of 1903 is a mockery and a delusion." This remark was not without its reaction on the mind of Nivedita, for the reason that it came from the lips of a man like Ramesh Chandra Dutta with whom her acquaintance since 1901 in London, had already developed into a deep friendship. Nivedita was a great admirer of Ramesh Chandra and she was all praise for the latter's epoch-making work in the field of economics of the country as embodied in his

famous book, "The Economic History of India." Another notable incident in her life during this time was her acquaintance with Bipin Chandra Pal whom she had met earlier in America. She became a regular contributor to Bipin Chandra's *New India* which came out in 1903. This marked the turning point in her career. So long her contact with the people was from the platform, but henceforward she exchanged the platform for the pen and since then fiery writings flowed incessantly from her pen in a way that was astonishing in its ultimate effect, particularly on the young mind. As a writer, it may be noted here, Nivedita fulfilled a great role by not only interpreting the manners, customs, religion, philosophy of India to the West, but also by giving forceful expression of India's political aspirations and attitudes towards an alien rule. In this respect alone Nivedita's contribution towards the renaissance of India is almost incalculable and we have reason to remain grateful to her for her national writings, if not for anything else.

Nivedita could not remain at Darjeeling for a long time as she had planned. There were urgent invitations from the people in Northern India to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem before the ensuing session of the Congress. So Nivedita proceeded to Bankipore in the biting cold of December. As soon as she arrived at the station in the early morning, she was greeted by the Muslim representatives of the locality with flower bouquets and basketful of oranges and an address of welcome written on a country-made paper. All these she accepted smilingly. Nivedita remained there for a few weeks, delivering a number of lectures on "Islam in India" which were greatly appreciated by the people there. These lectures at once revealed her historic sense and her ability to explain how the Muslims and the Hindus lived side by side for several centuries in India and how they were cordially tied to each other and

she cited a number of historical references to support her thesis. Later on, these lectures were incorporated in her famous work, *The Web of Indian Life*. The following passage from this book is worth quoting here:

"No one can stand and face the ruins behind the Kutub Minar at Delhi, no one can realise, even dimly, the beauty of Persian poetry, without understanding that Arab, Slav, Afghan, and Moghul came to India as the emissaries of a culture different indeed from, but not less imposing than, that of the people of the soil. A Hindu historian would have the first right to chant the paean of the Musalman faith, for it was upon Akbar, a sovereign of that creed, that the inspiration dawned to make a nation and a nationality out of the people of modern India. The reign of Akbar was contemporary with that of Elizabeth of England, and, with a still greater statesmanship and breadth of mind and heart, he undertook to inaugurate a vast national, as distinguished from a sectarian policy. Few indeed of the world's monarchs have ever used so marvellous an opportunity as this Emperor of Delhi. An almost equal sympathy with the speculations of all religions, a deep understanding and admiration of the old Indian system, with a desire only to complete and extend, never to nullify it; a love of everything that was national, with a habit of striking swiftly and pardoning generously—all these qualities gave Akbar a place in the hearts of his subjects."

The remark is significant of a mind trained and tutored by no less a person than Swami Vivekananda who preached and realised the gospel of universal brotherhood as no one did during this period.

Here we would like to make a digression to mention an incident in the life of Sister Nivedita during this period. The most important topic of the day was the

question of University Education. She had been an educationist all her life and she naturally felt a deep interest in the educational problems of India. Of the many disservices which Lord Curzon had done to India, his so-called reform of the universities was the most far-reaching in its consequences. In this connection Sir Surendrnath writes in his *A Nation in Making*:

"In 1901 Lord Curzon held an Educational Conference at Simla to which only European educationists were invited. The Conference was followed by the appointment of a University Commission, which, when its personnel was first announced, did not include a single Hindu member. Yet the Hindus had the largest interest in the educational problems that were to be considered. As a result of vigorous protest, Mr. Justice Gurudas Banerjee was subsequently added as a member of the Commission. It is worthy of remark that the Commissioners themselves admitted that the effect of their proposals would be to narrow the popular basis of high education, and to restrict its area."

A vigorous agitation was set up against the recommendations contained in the report. A Town Hall meeting was organised and a memorial was submitted to the Government. Nivedita did not remain aloof from all these happenings and she also joined her protest through the columns of the *Statesman* and other journals. And what was more significant was her influence on the Anglo-Indian press which supported the Indian standpoint. It was possible mainly on account of her deep friendship with Mr. Ratcliffe, the then editor of the *Statesman*. The agitation was not without its results. The Government of India partially accepted the popular view.

The Universities Act was passed in 1904. One of the foremost opponents of the Act was Sir Rashbehari Ghosh (famous for his princely gift to the Calcutta

University for a College of Science). Andrew Fraser was then the Rector of the University by virtue of his high office as the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. It was this Fraser who ridiculed Sir Rashbehari by calling him a "Pushing lawyer" and as a fitting reply to this arrogant remark, the latter came out with a pamphlet which was extensively distributed among the intelligentsia of Calcutta. It may be mentioned here that Nivedita had her hands in the preparation of this famous pamphlet, which, among other things, contained this caustic remark about Fraser: "This shows how far a Scotchman knows English language." This was Nivedita's composition, for, it was only she who knew that Fraser was a Scotch.

Another important episode during this period was Lord Curzon's Convocation address as the Chancellor of the Calcutta University. Hithertobefore Lord Curzon's improvements upon the Calcutta Municipal Bill, which officialised the Calcutta Corporation, and his educational policy, by which he tried to officialise the Calcutta University were severely criticised by the people of Bengal. Lord Curzon smarted under the criticism and the Convocation of the Calcutta University in February, 1902 gave him an opportunity to vent his spleen. To the young graduates present there he read a lecture which included among other things the following aspersion on the Indian Press:

"If I were asked to sum in a single word the most notable characteristic of the East—physical, intellectual and moral—as compared with the West, the word exaggeration or extravagance is the one that I should employ. It is particularly patent on the Native Press."

Sister Nivedita was present there and she was sitting just beside Sir Gurudas Banerjee. She felt insulted at this remark and she took Sir Gurudas aside and told him

that it was all lie and she will prove that it was Curzon who himself was a liar. Sir Gurudas was taken aback but at the same time he knew very well that Nivedita never made any statement half-heartedly, even though she identified herself with the cause of the Indians in their struggle for freedom. The reaction of the Chancellor's speech on the mind of Nivedita was so great that she at once took Sir Gurudas to the Imperial Library and there, after taking out a book from the shelf, showed a particular page to him. Sir Gurudas glanced through the page and then his astonishment knew no bounds at this strange discovery. Here was a book, entitled "Problems of the East", the author of which was no other person than Lord Curzon himself. The rest of the story is nonetheless interesting.

Lord Curzon's speech fell like a bomb-shell on the elite of Calcutta who had assembled to hear him at the annual Convocation of the Calcutta University. It created a sensation among the Indian public. But a greater sensation was created throughout India when, two days afterwards, the following appeared in the columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*;

"LORD CURZON IN VARIOUS CAPACITIES

As Chancellor of the University of Calcutta,
Address in Convocation.

February 11, 1902

"Untruthfulness consists in saying or doing anything that gives an erroneous impression either of one's own character or of other people's conduct or of the facts and incidents of life. I say that the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a Western conception. Undoubtedly truth took a high place in the moral codes of the West before it had been similarly honoured in the East.

"From 'PROBLEMS OF THE EAST'

By George Nathaniel Curzon, pp. 155-156

"Before proceeding to the royal audience, I enjoyed an interview with the President of the Korean foreign office. I remember some of his questions and answers. Having been particularly warned not to admit to him that I was only thirty-three years old, an age to which no respect attaches in Korea, when he put to me the straight question (invariably first in an Oriental dialogue), 'How old are you?' I unhesitatingly responded 'Forty'. 'Dear me,' he said, 'You look very young for that. How do you account for it?' 'By the fact,' I replied, 'that I have been travelling for a month in the superb climate of His Majesty's dominions.'"

After quoting the above two passages, the *Patrika* wrote that this latter passage containing the interview of Lord Curzon with the President of the Korean Foreign Office, had been discreetly omitted from the last edition of the *Problems of the East*, a book written by Lord Curzon, though it had appeared in the first edition. The above extracts along with the editorial notes (which was captioned "Who is Liar?") thereon created a sensation among the reading public not only of this country but of other countries as well.

Now the brain behind all this was none but Sister Nivedita. It was she who aimed this arrow from behind to protect the honour of the Indians. It was she who first collected those two extracts and then, again, it was she who induced Sir Gurudas to write the editorial, "Who is Liar"? and finally, it was she who personally requested the renowned Motilal Ghose and Sisir Kumar Ghose to publish them in the *Patrika* with a view to vindicate their national prestige. Again, it was only Nivedita who knew about the contents of the two editions of the book written by Lord Curzon. So completely she turned the

tables on the Viceroy when he launched his cruel indictment against the people of India with regard to truthfulness, that everybody congratulated Nivedita for this journalistic skill. No more effective way could have been devised of exposing the fallacy that the highest ideal of truth is a Western conception than that which Nivedita so cleverly took up.

Since this incident, both Motilal and Sisir Kumar became her intimate friends and since they were almost neighbours to each other, Motilal and Sisir Kumar used to frequent Nivedita's residence with a view to discuss with her about current politics. They also invited her to contribute more and more articles in the *Patrika*. Particularly it was Motilal who became one of her great admirers. To him Nivedita was an Avatar of selfless sacrifice.

The matter however did not rest there. Following in the footsteps of Sister Nivedita, Rabindranath also did not keep silent. He pointed on the very nose of Curzon how the English carried on a tirade of lies against the Boers in the Boer war during 1899-1902. Even Sir Surendranath did not forget to mention this incident in his Memoirs:

"But that was Lord Curzon's method, and we Orientals regarded it with a feeling of amusement, as coming from one who had extolled the ethics of the West above the baser morality of the East."

This incident alone shows to what extent Nivedita identified herself with our national aspirations and to what length she could go to vindicate our honour and prestige. That she was a lion-hearted disciple of her great Master was clearly proved by this single episode.

Dawn Society was another field of her activity and a reference to it will not be out of place here. In a small

lane near about the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Hall in Cornwallis Street, Calcutta, there was a hostel for the students. A room in the first floor of this hostel building was the office of the Dawn Society while the room in the ground floor was occupied by the Field and Academy Club. The founder of this Society was Satish Chandra Mukherjee who was a class friend of Swami Vivekananda and a disciple of Bijoykrishna Goswamy, another luminous figure in the nineteenth century spiritual history of Bengal. The adjoining open space was the famous '*Pantir Math*' where public lectures used to be held in those hectic days. Satish Chandra had already started his "*Dawn magazine*" (1897) and five years later, the Dawn Society was founded. Nivedita was a regular contributor in the *Dawn* as well as a regular lecturer in the Society. Dawn society was the forum for political education of the younger generation of the country while the object of the *Dawn* magazine was as under:

"We believe that whatever seeks and tends to raise human thought and life to a higher level than where they are, has in it the very truth of all religions. But as such individual stands at a fixed point in his stage of spirit-progress (and thought-progress), which is different from the rest, the same fixed code of spirit-discipline (and thought-dicipline) will not apply for all. Hence the need of covering the whole field of human activity within the fold of an all-embracing religion. The spirit of universalism, the very breath of progress upwards, is not inconsistent with, but is highly co-operant towards a special study of systems of thought and belief, which is equally necessary to a special evolution of each individual spirit. Each race, therefore, should cultivate this double line of progress; and as Hindus, we propose, in this paper, to make a special study of Hindu life, thought and faith, in a spirit of appreciation, while

remaining fully alive to the usefulness and necessity of the existence of all other systems, secular or religious, Eastern or Western."

The motto of the *Dawn* was taken from Sankaracharya: "That which is ever permanent in one mode of being is the Truth." Thus Nivedita could easily identify herself with the aspirations of the *Dawn* which ran almost parallel to those of her Master. Moreover, the topics discussed on its pages included not only religion and philosophy, but also national education, economics, sociology, science, nationalism and the science of education and it was these topics which appealed to her most. Among the contributors of the *Dawn* were Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Sir Gurudas Banerjee, Hirendra Nath Datta, Bipin Chandra Pal, Akbar Haidari, Swami Abhedananda, Ananda Coomarswamy, Sarala Devi, Nivedita, Mahendralal Sarkar, Satish Chandra Vidyabhushan, Radhakumud Mookherjee, Ramaprasad Chanda, Bidhu Sekhar Sastri, S. Ramaswami Iyer, A. Govinda Charlu, Ramatirtha Swami, Pramathanath Tarkabhushan, M. M. Bhavanagri, Nagendranath Ghosh, Pandit Durgacharan Sankhatirtha, Kalinath Roy and many other eminent Indian scholars of the time. Even foreign writers like Sylvan Levy, E. B. Havel, Annie Besant, Kakusa Okakura, J. B. Kieth and others used to contribute on its pages. Thus it was the *Dawn* which could claim on those days to be the organ of the highest Eastern and Western thought and at the same time it was the mirror of the Swadeshi days of Bengal. The paper continued its glorious existence for more than a decade.

The Dawn Society, founded in 1902, on the other hand, was the forum of debate and discussions on the nation-building topics of the day. Satish Chandra wanted to inspire the younger generation with the lofty ideals of

service and sacrifice for the motherland. Among those who used to give regular lectures in the Society were Satishchandra, Nivedita, Rabindranath, Nilkantha Goswamy, Ramesh Chandra Datta, Jadunath Sarkar, Dinesh Chandra Sen and Swami Saradananda. For three years Nivedita gave a number of lectures in the Society and it was from the platform of the Society that she inspired the youths of Bengal with the noble ideals of Vivekananda which went straight into their heart.

One day the students requested her to speak something on the Gita. Nivedita said: "Do you know, what I have learnt from the Gita? It is the perennial source of strength which you are called to imbibe. When will there arise the veritable fighter with the Gita on his one hand and the sword on the other? We can easily follow in the footsteps of our national hero, Swami Vivekananda to whom the message of Lord Krishna as embodied in the Gita was the message of strength and manliness, the two great virtues we need to develop today more than anything else." Sometimes she used to speak to them in the following manner: "If you want to realise the true India, try to dream like Akbar and Ashoke. None can hope to become a patriot by merely reading books. It should be the very breath of your life." The lectures delivered by Nivedita thus wielded a considerable influence on those days in the minds of the students community. She was the inspiring angel, indeed!

It was here in the Dawn Society that Nivedita came to be acquainted with another freedom-fighter in the person of Brahmabandhav Upadhaya whose nationalism had its source in the ideals of Swami Vivekananda. An imposing figure, clad in saffron cloth, Upadhaya was all fire and his nationalism had its foundation on the ancient culture of this country, even though he was a Roman Catholic by faith. A restless spirit, he took upon himself

the unfinished task of Vivekananda almost with a missionary zeal. Naturally Nivedita was attracted to him, for there was a great affinity between their ideals which aimed at the freedom of India from the British rule. Nivedita and Upadhyaya may be called the twin spark that came from the ashes of Vivekananda to carry on his mission. During the Swadeshi days both of them worked side by side and their combined effort was tremendous on the younger generation of those days.

Now let us return to the story where we left it in the earlier part of this chapter. Soon after her return to Calcutta from her tour in Northern India Nivedita found that the Government had taken umbrage of her activity. She felt that she was under surveillance. She was watched as far as the very point of her Baghbazar residence, in the alleys and the lanes. This was the beginning of 1904. This was the year of "Aggressive Hinduism". Not only Nivedita, but Bipin Chandra, Brahmabandhab, even Rabindranath, all were preaching the same thing; the underlying tone was the same: militant Hinduism or neo-Hinduism along with extremism in politics. The air was thick with this sentiment. Nivedita preached "Aggressive Hinduism", Brahmabandhav "Personality of Sri Krishna". Nivedita's standpoint was: "No other religion in the world is so capable of this dynamic transformation as Hinduism. Our work is not now to protect ourselves but to convert others. Aggression is to be the dominant characteristic of the India that is today. Merely to change the attitude of the mind, in this way is already to accomplish a revolution." Rabindranath delivered a lecture on "Swadeshi Samaj" from the platform of the Minerva theatre with Ramesh Chandra Datta as the president. The swan-song of the poet's speech was neo-Hinduism while Bipin Chandra Pal harped the same tune in his *New*

India. All of them insisted on the importance of adhering to our own culture and religion and cultivating our own ideals in the pattern chalked out by the modern makers of India since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Thus the conditions were favourable for the cultivation of aggressive Hinduism of which Nivedita was the high priestess.

The year 1904 finds Nivedita and Rabindranath drawn together in a bond of friendship which increased day by day as the poet came to know more and more of this benevolent woman who has adopted India as her second motherland. The friendship of Rabindranath is an important episode in the Sister's life. The same is true of her friendship with Jagadish Chandra Bose and we propose to deal with it in a separate chapter later on.

In the month of October (1904), Nivedita went to Bodh-Gaya accompanied by Rabindranath, Jagadish Chandra, Lady Abala Bose and Sir Jadunath Sarkar. Sir Jadunath has recorded this account beautifully and we can do no better than to quote him here:

"Early in the month of October, 1904, Nivedita, Dr. J. C. Bose, Rabindranath, Swami Sadananda, Brahmachari Amulya (now Swami Sankarananda, by then called by Nivedita always as nephew!) went to pass a week at Bodh-Gaya. I was invited and joined them from Patna. We were lodged in the *Mohunt's* guest house. We were struck by her penetrative interpretation of the Indian scriptures, art, and folklore. She had the power of going into the very heart of things and she was a marvellous exponent of them. Here at Bodh-Gaya, a short distance of the Bodhi tree under which Buddha had attained Nirvana twenty-five centuries ago, Nivedita discovered a big circular stone slab carved all along the margin with the marks of the *Vajra* or thunder-bolt, which is said to

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have been supplied by Indra, the king of the gods, to Buddha. Nivedita remarked: 'When a man devotes his whole self to the good of mankind, he becomes powerful like the thunder-bolt in the hands of the gods.' That was how she charmingly interpreted the Buddhist legend which tell us that when Prince Gautama was meditating day after day, seated on a bundle of grass, how to attain truth, Indra noticed it, and sent down to him a throne of adamant to sit down upon, and that was why she adopted the Indian figure of the thunder-bolt as the emblem in her books. And Sir J. C. Bose too has done the same thing. Nivedita also said that the sign of thunder-bolt should be adopted as the national emblem of India.

"At Bodh-Gaya, the very scholarly and good-natured Mohunt, who was our host, wanted to endow some chairs for the spread of knowledge. Sister Nivedita urged that it should be rather for higher scientific teaching of our people than for creating centres of teaching Sanskrit or philosophy of which there was no dearth. This showed that she stood apart from our Hindu revivalists in never forgetting the news of the modern age. She was not an obscurantist or defender of everything past. She keenly perceived, what Vivekananda has preached to us, that modern economic activity and modern science are not incompatible with Hindu spirituality, but rather absolutely necessary for the permanent spiritual uplift of the Indians.

"There were daily readings from Warren's *Buddhism in translation* and occasionally Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*; some songs and recitations by the Poet, too. In the evening twilight we went to the Bodhi tree and sat in the gloom in silent meditation. There we found a remarkable character, Fuji, a poor Japanese fisherman who had by a hard austerity for many years, saved money to

gratify his life's dream of making a pilgrimage to the spot where the Blessed One had attained Enlightenment. He had at last come here and lived frugally in a room of the pilgrim house. Every evening Fuji would come and sit under the Bodhi tree praying and chanting the hymn:

Namo namo Buddha Divakaraya

Namo namo Gotam Chandikaya

Namo namo Anant-Gunannabaya

Namo namo Sakya Nandanaya.

"In the silence and gloaming, the Sanskrit words uttered with a Japanese accent, rose like the tolling of a low bell, which made us feel as if overpowered by the spirit of the place. Words were not uttered. It interests me to think that Rabindranath remembered this hymn, and when he wrote his play, *Natir Puja*, he took care to insert it as Srimati's prayer. Fuji had given the hint.

"One afternoon we went to the village Urubel, the Uru Vill of the Buddhist days, where Sujata, the daughter of the headman, lived. She it was who brought to Buddha the cup of milk pudding with which he broke his fast after he had attained to *Sambodhi*. No trace of the old houses stand today; but Nivedita was in raptures. She took up a clod of earth from the field and held it reverently to her head, saying, 'The whole ground is hallowed. Sujata was the type of the true house mistress; she did the duty of nourishing the world's teacher.' Then she quoted Vivekananda's saying that 'it was not a pure waste that fifty-two lakhs of religious mendicants are maintained by the pious householders of India, for out of this idle fraternity, once in a time a Ramakrishna comes out; under no other social system could his advent have been possible.'"

From Bodh-Gaya Nivedita went to Rajgir and thence to Banaras and Allahabad on pilgrimage to recapture the spirit of the past. From Bodh-Gaya to Rajgir was a

distance of fifty miles. The pilgrims walked on foot as in the time of Buddha and only marched in the night in clear moonlight. There came an elephant for the ladies and children. The men followed the bearer of torches. Every night two halts were made around a great fire for resting; then one of the pilgrims recited the words of the Buddha melodiously. Amongst the friends of Nivedita, Gokhale alone missed the call. Nivedita and the party spent two weeks there. She was simply overwhelmed to see the ruins of this ancient place of Indian history. She could easily recapture the spirit of the past glory of Rajgir and she subsequently recorded her experience in her *Foot-falls of Indian History*. Walking up and down over the austere desolate ruins of Rajgir, Nivedita could gather an idea of what the palace of Bimbisara and the homes of his subjects must have been like. Here on the Vulture Peak Buddha used to spend the monsoon days. Within the massive Cathedral-cave of Sonar Bhandar, there echo to this hour, she felt, the immortal reverberations of Buddha's voice. According to Nivedita, "Buddha passed this spot with treasure already in the heart, needing only long years of brooding thought to fuse his whole self in its realisation. Unless he was sure of the truth before he reached here, he could not have gone, sure and straight as an arrow from the bow to the un-frequented forests of bel-trees with its cave overhanging the river and its great tree between the farms and ponds, where now the humble village of Bodh-Gaya stands." Then again she writes: "I felt this when I was at Rajgir, and saw so plainly, shining through the Buddhist period, the outline and colour of an earlier India still—the India of the Mahabharata."

Nivedita was no fashionable tourist, otherwise she could never took up a clod of earth and exclaim that the house of Sujata was a sacred soil! This very fervour of her

zeal shows how respectfully she adhered herself to India.

Nivedita visited many sacred places of India undergoing privations and hardships like any Hindu pilgrim, and explained the inner significance of the *Tirthas* in her own novel way. She had a wonderful, sympathetic, and penetrative power of going to the very heart of things. The rituals, the customs and the traditions, some of which we have forgotten and some of which we follow blindly or as explained by the priests, were restored to their original colour, their true meaning, by the novel and critical exposition of the Sister. She loved her adopted land and admired all that is great and good in Mother India.

"At the time of leaving Bodh-Gaya," writes Sir Jadunath, she broke down and went all night in her room, saying, 'We have failed. The country has not been roused from its slumber; it has not come back to life. The people listen to me and go in their old way. We have been able to do nothing. The true spirit of India,—what once made India the glory of the world and the heart of Asia,—has not been revived. When will the nation be conscious of its glorious heritage and the distinct place it once occupied in the growth of human thought and human civilisation. When will that life, that spirit return?'"

While returning from her pilgrimage, Nivedita visited the Khuda Baksh Library at Bankipore. There the librarian "showed her Sha Jehan's signature on a illuminated Persian manuscript. Nivedita asked if she might touch it. The permission being given, she placed the palm of her hand on the writing and inly meditated for a minute as if to stretch a connecting link between her mind and the spirit of the far-off past. She, too, picked up an old common place brick at Nalanda and an undecorated bit of stone at Sarnath, and kept them

reverently in her study." This sincerity of her attitude at once reveals to us the special trait of her character and mind. To Nivedita nothing of India's past was commonplace; everything was symbolic; she cared not for the exterior because she had taught herself to penetrate to the heart of things. This accounts for her special ability to interpret the culture of India so convincingly before the West.

AMIDST THE GREAT CONTEMPORARIES

A NATION'S chief strength comes out of a belief in its own capacity, and such a belief is the national product of the conviction of the greatness of its ancestors, the reassuring thought that what they had done their progeny can do. Hence Nivedita gloried, and urged us to glory, in ancient India's achievements, not merely in spiritual culture, but also in arts and science, commerce and crafts. She thus became the trumpet voice of the renascent India on the firmament of which shone brightly during the early days of the twentieth century a galaxy of stars foremost among them were Rabindranath, Jagadish Chandra and Abanindranath. Nivedita was naturally attracted to each of them for the part each of them played in the spheres of literature, science and art. Her association with each of them was fruitful and helpful in many respects and the story of Nivedita's life will be incomplete without any reference to it.

It was the perception of higher scientific teaching that India needed most, that made Nivedita admire, almost idolise Jagadish Chandra Bose. For in the dark age of modern India he was the man, according to Nivedita, who first put India on the scientific map of the world. Shortly after her arrival in India, it may be mentioned here, Nivedita came to be acquainted with this

young scientist and his worthy wife, Lady Abala Bose. When the Nivedita Girls' School was started, Jagadish Chandra helped the school by presenting a carriage and a horse and Sreemati Labanyaprabha Basu, a sister of Jagadish Chandra, was the first to offer her services without any remuneration. Thereafter when Nivedita accompanied her Master in his last European tour in 1900, she had the opportunity to witness personally the achievement of Jagadish Chandra in the Paris Congress where the distinguished scientists of the world had assembled. Swami Vivekananda himself felt proud on account of this scientist, whose remarkable discoveries had thrilled the whole scientific world. Nivedita remembered how her Master met Jagadish Chandra frequently, and how he would point out to his numerous acquaintances the greatness of this young Indian scientist, the pride and glory of Bengal. She also remembered that "once at a distinguished gathering, when a disciple of a certain celebrated English scientist laid claim to the fact that his master was experimenting on the growth of a stunted lily, the Swami replied, "O, that's nothing! Bose will make the very pot in which the lily grows respond.!"

Jagadish Chandra's residence was then at 92/3, Upper Circular Road. At No. 91, on the same street, used to live Prafulla Chandra, the celebrated Chemist who was equally an admirer of Nivedita. Next to Jorasanko, it was the abode of the scientist that attracted Nivedita most. She used to frequent the place whenever she would find time, drawn mainly by the genius and patriotic feelings of Jagadish Chandra. Here was a scientist who had firm faith in the ancient glory of his country and at the same time he could envisage a more glorious future for India due to her contact with the Western civilisation. Here was a mind deeply saturated in the traditional greatness of the country, yet not indifferent to all that was great

and good in the culture of the West. And, above all, here was a man who was a nationalist to every fibre of his structure. Deeply engrossed in his scientific pursuits amidst conditions far from favourable, Jagadish Chandra, it seemed to Nivedita, was almost helpless. She came and stood by her side; gave him encouragement and helped him in all possible ways to carry on with his scientific researches which were destined to bring new glory to the country. Jagadish Chandra, a helpless victim of the Anglo-Indian educationists of the day, on the other hand, felt attracted to this benevolent woman whose love for India, her adopted mother land, was more than a passion. It was a religion with her, so it seemed to the scientist and this endeared her more than anything else to him. Jagadish Chandra could never forget the self-less love and affection which Sister Nivedita cherished for him and he expressed his gratefulness to the invaluable services which the Sister rendered to him in his research work, by preparing notes and in many other ways. But for the help of Nivedita, Jagadish Chandra could not complete his famous work, *Plant Response*. Again, it was she, who induced the Indian Press to comment on the researches done by this patriot-scientist.

In this connection we are reminded of what Sir Jagadish Chandra said on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Bose Institute on 10th November, 1917. Expressing his gratefulness to Sister Nivedita he said: "I recall with deep gratitude the help and inspiration I received in the early days of my career from Sister Nivedita. It is only known to me alone to what extent she evinced her eagerness for the foundation of this Institute."

So deep was this love and affection, that Nivedita breathed her last at the Darjeeling residence of Jagadish Chandra and on the lap of his devoted wife, Abala Bose.

Rabindranath knew Nivedita from the very earliest day of her arrival in India. But it was not before the Calcutta plague of 1898, that he came to know her fully. Since then the friendship between them developed to such an extent that Nivedita was all praise for the poet, for his nationalism, for his universalism and for the progressive outlook of his thoughts and ideas which transcended the narrow bounds of nationalism to merge with the internationalism, yet retaining its root on the firm soil of the cultural tradition of the country. An incident at Silaidaha is worth mentioning here. Nivedita sometimes used to visit the Poet at Silaidaha. One day it so happened that she wanted to see the sunrise on the banks of the Padma. Rabindranath accompanied her. They had not proceeded far when Nivedita's attention was all on a sudden drawn to a group of peasants standing near by and looking at her curiously. They were accustomed to see their Zamindar, Rabindranath, but their astonishment knew no bounds at the sight of this strange lady clad in saffron cloth. Nivedita asked them: "What makes you stand here and look at us so curiously?"

"We are looking at the *Memsahib*," was the simple reply.

"There is nothing to look at me. But how far is your village?" asked Nivedita.

"There—there," they replied pointing to the distant village.

"Come on, I will go to your village," so saying she accompanied them. Nivedita was sitting on the mud huts of the simple peasants and talking with the village wives when the sun rose on the shores of the Padma.

For days together Nivedita forgot all about Rabindranath. She went from village to village, mixed with the people there, talked with them, ate with them, laughed with them as if she was one of them. Her

curiosity did not rest there. She wanted to know all about the unsophisticated village life of Bengal, its crafts, its folk-lore and its ancient tradition. Rabindranath was taken by surprise at this strange inquisitiveness on the part of a foreign woman. When he asked her if there was any necessity to enter into the details of the village life, Nivedita replied without any hesitation: "Surely. In order to understand a nation, we have got to accept everything associated with it." This passion, this fervour, this sincerity on the part of Nivedita so much endeared her to the poet that later on he used to say: "Nivedita's love for India was genuine, and not a momentary outburst...she did not come to us with the impertinent curiosity of a visitor, nor did she elevate herself on a special high perch with the idea that a bird's eye view is truer than the human view because of its superior aloofness. She lived our life and came to know us by becoming one of ourselves."

Rabindranath sometimes used to come down to the narrow lane of Baghbazar where Nivedita lived an unostentious life. And who did not come here? Jagadish Chandra, Aurobindo, Abanindranath, Dinesh Chandra, Sir Jadunath, Tilak, Gokhale, even Lady Minto—all the celebrities of the time used to frequent the residence of the Sister at No. 17, Bose para Lane. In the days of Swadeshi movement, Nivedita and Rabindranath used to give lectures from the same platform on many occasions. Her literary genius appealed to the poet so much that he used to discuss topics on poetry and literature with ease. He was simply struck by her range of knowledge. Some of his patriotic songs and poems written at this period, were translated into English by Nivedita. Nivedita's character so much influenced the poet that quite unwittingly he conceived the character of 'Gora', the hero his famous novel of the same name, in the pattern of

Nivedita. The biographer of Rabindranath writes in this connection:

"The Poet commenced writting *Gora* at the beginning of 1907, that is, at the end of the Bengal-Partition movement. The main theme of the novel is this that *Gora*, son of an Irish father and Indian mother, was a foreigner, he belonged to a separate religion and yet at the same time he cherished a strong feeling of hatred against the English people; to him everything of the Hindu religion was true and sacred. *Gora* is a patriot and his patriotism was keenly felt by the poet at some-times during the days of the great upheaval of the Swadeshi movement. One can almost trace the ideology of Vivekananda and Nivedita in *Gora*. How Nivedita made the impossible possible by becoming Hindu, Rabindranath must have thought it again and again and it was out of this that grew his conception of "*Gora*". There is no doubt that the Poet created his hero out of the materials he gathered from the character and the characteristics of the temper of Nivedita."

Thirteen years after the death of Nivedita, "*Gora*" was published and it may interest us to know that while Nivedita was alive, the Poet used to discuss with her about the nebulous plot of this famous novel whenever he could find some occassion to do so. Thus Rabindranath has immortalised the fiery Nivedita in his equally fiery hero, "*Gora*".

Another star shining on the formament of Bengal was Abanindranath, the celebrated artist, who belonged to the Tagore family of Jorasanko. It is difficult to assess the contribution of Sister Nivedita in the realm of Indian art during the period of its renaissance. As an art-critic of first order, it fell on her lot to popularise the new trend in the Indian art which had then just developed

as a result of all round national awakening. It will repay one's investigation to find out to what extent the renaissance of Indian art owes to the genius of Nivedita so far its interpretation and propagation abroad were concerned. The opinions expressed by her on Indian art, and art in general, were of the highest order. It is true, she has not written any treatise on art, but when one gleans her opinions from her numerous criticisms on the paintings of the eminent Indian artists, one is struck with the sweep of her imagination and the breadth of her vision. Of course it is true that Nivedita had artistic faculty aroused in her by her Master, Swami Vivekananda who inherited a taste for fine arts from his own family. It is well known to the readers of the life of Vivekananda that during his wanderings in India and abroad, he made the architecture and the art-collection of the locality, the object of his keen study. His biographers further say, "Perceiving the relationship between religion and art in his own land, the Swami used to say, 'Hindus live in art...when the true history of India will be discovered, it will be proved that as India is the first teacher of man in the domain of religion, so she is also the first teacher in art.'"

It is an interesting thing to know that it was Swamiji himself who inspired Sister Nivedita to hold a discourse on 'Fine Arts of Ancient India' at New York in August 1899. Again, in 1900 at the Congress of the History of Religions held in Paris, Swami Vivekananda protested against the then accepted theory of Greek influence on Indian art. Nivedita, who accompanied her Master there, had the privilege to have the first knowledge about it and to follow with keen interest the course of her Master's argument in support of his contention. Swamiji argued, said Nivedita later on, that it was natural to have cultural intercourse between the both through

historical association. As the Greeks had learnt good many things from India, likewise India received something from the Greek artists; but it is not true to say that the soul of Indian art was overshadowed at any time by the Greek influence. It is interesting to note here that Vivekananda expressed this opinion long before Mr. E. B. Havel and Dr. Ananda Coomarswamy formulated their considerate opinions on the subject.

The renaissance of Indian art also owes considerably to the efforts of Mr. E. B. Havel according to whom, "Indian art was inspired by Indian nature, Indian philosophy and religious teaching." Nothing was imported from the West. "The little Greek, or Greco-Roman art that came into India went there in the ordinary way of commercial and political intercourse, not as part of any intellectual or religious propaganda. It was assimilated by the Indian art in much the same way as a great deal of Oriental art became incorporated in the Italian art."

Now let us turn to Ananda Coomarswamy who had an ethnic eye on the subject. As regards the much debated Greek influence in Gandhara art, he says: "All we can say definitely is that practically every element essential to the iconography of Buddha and Bodhisattva figures appears in early Indian art before the Buddha figure of Gandhara or Mathura is known." Again, he says, "I am prepared to assert that the Hellenistic element actually traceable in Gupta art is really insignificant...If art of the Gandhara school is half Indian, art of the Kushan and Gupta periods in the Ganges valley is altogether Indian..." Thus we see that the protest raised by Swami Vivekananda at the Congress of the History of Religions, was a prophecy regarding the true situation of the history of Indian art. And, following in the footsteps of her Master, Sister Nivedita's artistic senses penetrated the veil of darkness that imperial cant had enshrouded the history of develop-

ment of Indian art and architecture. Her genius could easily foresee the truth in the matter.

Thus it was Vivekananda who inspired Sister Nivedita for her understanding of Indian art. And Nivedita in her turn gave a new direction in the study of the history of Indian art. It is interesting to know what Nandalal Bose, the celebrated artist, says in this connection:

"Whatever discussion the Sister Nivedita used to hold on art, her ideal was undoubtedly received from Swamiji. Again, the ideal of aesthetics of Ramakrishnadeva was manifested through Swamiji. Swamiji had a personal bold ideal of manliness which the Sister Nivedita inherited from him. On hearing the discourses from the mouth of the Sister, I used to imagine as if I was hearing the spirited and fearless words of Swamiji. Nivedita has mentioned of her indebtedness to Swamiji in this respect in many places of her book, *The Master As I Saw Him*..... During 1906, the Sister individually spoke to me from time to time. Once she came to the Government School of Art to meet Abanindranath Tagore. At that time she inspected some of my paintings and gave me the following advice in respect of a picture of Mother Kali: "Why have you put so much garment on her? Kali is sky-claded, she is fearless and maker of *Pralaya* i.e. destruction".

Another incident recorded by Nandalal Bose is worth mentioning here:

"Once we were invited by the Sister to come to her place at Bosepara Lane. I and my fellow-student, Surendra Ganguly went to visit the Sister one day. We went upstairs to her outer sitting room. We sat on a sofa with our feet stretched below. The Sister did not like this posture. Showing a little Buddha statue lying on the table, she asked us to sit in that way. So we sat cross-legged on the floor. Then she said, "You are all Buddhas." Then our disaffection vanished from our hearts. Pointing

to a bronze statue, she asked, 'Whose statue is this?' We answered, 'It is a Buddha statue'. She said, 'No, it is the statue of Swamiji'. Then she asked me to paint a picture of Swamiji sitting in such a posture. Later on at her request I painted such a picture for her."

The impression which Nivedita left on Abanindranath has also found beautiful expression in the following words of the master-artist:

"But for Nivedita it would not have been possible for Nandalal and others to go to Ajanta. What a fine woman she was! I first met her at the residence of the American Consul on the occasion of Okakura's reception there. She was invited there. Clad in a white overflowing dress with a garland of *Rudraksha* around her neck, she seemed to me as an ascetic carved out of a white marble. It is impossible to describe her beauty. Next time I met her at the residence of Justice Homewood where a party was being held under the auspices of the Art Society. Nivedita was invited there. She came long after the party had commenced. It was a splendid gathering, the elite of the city, the nobility and the gentry all attired in profuse dress had assembled there along with the best-attired ladies. Fashion and splendour went side by side and everybody seemed to vie with each other in point of his or her dress. Laughters mingled with music, rose and fell. Evening was about to descend when Nivedita entered there. Her appearance was just like the appearance of moon amidst the stars. The most beautiful ladies there seemed to pale into insignificance before her dignity of simple beauty. Attired in the same white cloth, with the necklace of *Rudraksha* around her neck and her hair, half golden and half silvery, Nivedita attracted at once everybody's attention. All gaze were fixed on her. Low whispering went around. "Who she might be?" asked Woodrofe Blunt. I introduced Nivedita

to the leading members of the party. You may speak of beauty, but to me Nivedita was the ideal beautiful woman, *Mahasweta* of *Kadambari*! Rarely have I seen such a woman of fair complexion and sharp features. She seemed to me to be the perfection of beauty, so to say. One would feel inspired by talking to her even for a few minutes."

In 1909 Lady Herringham came to India to copy the fresco paintings of Ajanta caves. Nivedita at once wrote to Abanindranath requesting him to send Nandalal and Asit Kumar along with Lady Herringham, to copy the fresco paintings there. Her enthusiasm was so great that she made all the necessary arrangements for them, bought the railway tickets and provided them with a fund for their journey. Even, later on, Nivedita personally went there to supervise their work. Nothing could delight her most than to see the Indian artists progressing and their future was always uppermost in her mind.

Nivedita also gave instructions on Indian art to E. B. Havell. She made him understand the internal mystery and esoteric meaning of the Indian art. Thus it is clear that Nivedita was inspired by her Master, Swami Vivekananda, to understand the spiritual import of Indian fine arts. As a result, it was Havell, the first English art-critic who defended the true import of Indian art from the vulgar attacks of the British imperialist critics. Later on, Nivedita herself assumed the responsibility of interpreting Indian art through the columns of Ramananda Chatterjee's *Prabasi* and *Modern Review* which carried every month Nivedita's illuminating commentary on the paintings of the young Indian artists of her time. Not only that, she also arranged to write in defense of Indian art in the art-journals of London, New York and Tokyo.

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As an exponent of Indian art, she stands high and in this respect we are indebted to Nivedita forever. Her criticisms on Indian art are as much valuable as they are instructive. Nivedita's interpretation of Indian art has not lost its significance or value even today.

It is interesting to remember that very often Nivedita used to say: "The rebirth of the National Art of India is my dearest dream" and since her stay at Bodh-Gaya she had often spoken of the rebirth of art as a prerequisite to the "unity of India" which was also one of Nivedita's cherished dreams.

SWADESHI MOVMENT AND NIVEDITA

THE year 1905 is one of the most memorable in the history of Bengal. It would be no exaggeration to say that it was an epoch-making year, leaving a profound and far-reaching influence on the public life of Bengal and the future of the country. It was the year of the Partition of Bengal.

There had been for some time a general feeling in official quarters that Bengal was too large a charge for a single ruler, and that the partition of the province was necessary in the interests of administrative efficiency, Lord Curzon was then at the head of affairs. His energy was feverish. He was upsetting and unsettling things. It was he who proposed the separation from Bengal of the whole of Chittagong Division, to which the districts of Daccá and Mymensingh were to be added, and this area was to be incorporated into Assam. It was in this form that the proposal came up for discussion before the public of Bengal. It roused strong opposition among all sections of the community—Hindus and Moslems alike. It was an opposition which the Government could not ignore. Lord Curzon visited East Bengal, ostensibly with the object of ascertaining public opinion, but really to overawe it. He was so hopelessly out of touch with the new spirit that his own reactionary policy had helped to foster, that he thought that his presence would serve to

bring the leaders of East Bengal round to his views. He was greatly mistaken. The leaders there told him with dignified firmness that they would regard the partition of Bengal as a grave disaster, and that they were opposed to it.

On July 20, 1905, the announcement was made that Bengal was to be partitioned, and the public were informed of the details of the Partition. For the first time they learnt that North Bengal with all its historical associations was to be separated from the old province. The announcement fell like a bomb-shell upon an astonished and bewildered public.

While the moderate leaders headed by Sir Surendranath were thinking reversing, or at any rate obtaining a modification of the Partition, the idea of the 'Boycott Movement' was in the air which thrust itself into prominence in the deliberations of the moderate leaders. The slumbering forces in the public life of Bengal were at once set in motion. The Swadeshi movement had already come into existence. At any rate the Swadeshi spirit was abroad. It was in the air. There was a growing party, led by the extremist leaders, among the educated community who espoused it. Sixteen days after the announcement, a mammoth meeting was held in the Town Hall, on 7th August, 1905. The meeting was presided by the Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandy of Cossimbazar. So vast was the gathering that it was necessary to hold three meetings instead of one. It was a memorable meeting. So long the Swadeshi spirit was in its infancy, but with this memorable Town Hall meeting, it burst into conflagration. It is against this background that we will see Nivedita as a fighting angel, as a warrior, giving herself heart and soul into the movement, rousing the people out of lethargy and inspiring them to fight to the finish. Henceforth Nivedita, the revolutionary,

Nivedita, the nationalist was in the fore front of the country-wide agitation, giving lectures, organising the handicrafts, and centres of supply and distribution of raw materials. She did everything to popularise the movement from one corner of the country to another, saying: "God is in action, in the play of life." Her leadership was accepted by the students of the Dawn Society, while others sought her counsel at this critical hour of national awakening.

It was a strange upheaval of public feeling. The spirit of Boycott spread like bonfire. It invaded our homes and captured the hearts of our women-folk, who were even more enthusiastic than the men. The air was surcharged with the Swadeshi spirit, and it was no exaggeration to say that Nivedita was one of the creators of this stupendous moral change. She held aloft the flag of India with the zeal of a true nationalist. She had already witnessed a revolution in Ireland and thus the Swadeshi movement at once captured her imagination set fire to her Irish blood and Nivedita was naturally lost into its vortex. Her lectures during this period created a fiery atmosphere and the young men were swayed and moved and even transported by the invisible influence that was felt on account of her stirring speeches and magnetic personality. One mighty impulse moved the heart of the community and carried everything before it. The part played by Sister Nivedita was indeed worthy of the disciple of Swami Vivekananda.

Nivedita simply overworked herself during these days and her frail body could not withstand it. Towards the end of August, 1905, she fell abruptly ill. The physicians' diagnosis was brain-fever and typhoid. Soon it took a serious turn and her life was in danger. Her friends and admirers thought that proper treatment and adequate nursing would not be possible at her Baghbazar residence.

At first it was decided to remove her to the Presidency General Hospital, but she refused to go there. Not only that, she even refused to be treated by any European doctor. At last she was removed to a spacious house adjoining to the residence of Jagadish Chandra Bose and Dr. Nilratan Sarkar began to treat her while Sister Christine undertook the responsibility to nurse her. The fever continued for thirty days and during this period it so happened that twice she hovered between life and death. Finally, she recovered from her illness when she was taken to Darjeeling for further convalescence. Nivedita took along with her the voluminous manuscript of Dr. Bose's *Response in the living and non-living* with the intention to revise it. While she lay seriously ill, her school had to be closed down for want of fund and this fact was withheld from her for the time being.

While at Darjeeling, Nivedita's mind was fully engrossed with the development of the movement due to Partition. From Darjeeling she wrote two letters to Gokhale who was then in London. By this time it was rumoured that Gokhale intended to support the Partition. Nivedita in one of her letters to him wanted to be sure of this and in another letter she explained to Gokhale the historical necessity of the Boycott movement in Bengal and how the Bengalis have gained strength on account of it. In the middle of October, at a meeting held at Darjeeling, Nivedita struck the key-note in her speech : "We shall continue the struggle until the sacrifice and heroism of the children of India compel the English to remove the insulting barrier which divides Bengal, until they show a respect to us." Here at Darjeeling she completed her monograph, *A Study of Love and Death*.

The struggle went on. *Swadeshi* meetings were held all over the country, even in places beyond Bengal. It was a time of unusual excitement and strenuous work.

None spared himself. Everyone did his best. Leaders travelled to places strange and unknown, often difficult of access. They addressed meetings and in as many places as they could. They ate strange food. They minded nothing. They complained of nothing. They put up with the severest of hardships and inconveniences in their journeys to distant places. They even faced the risks of malaria and cholera. Their enthusiasm was their protection. "The Government was alarmed at the upheaval of public feeling, and it adopted the familiar methods of repression, which only served to stimulate such feeling. The students and young men had taken a prominent part in the *Swadeshi* movement. Their zeal had fired the whole community. They had become the self-appointed missionaries of the cause. The *Swadeshi* movement gave an impetus to all our activities, literary, political and industrial. Literature felt the full impact of the rising tide of national sentiment. Patriotic songs and poems from the pens of Rabindranath, Kavyabisharad and Rajanikanta Sen, filled the air."

The month of October was rapidly approaching. The 16th October was to be the day on which the Partition of Bengal was to take effect. For Bengal it was to be a day of national mourning. The leaders resolved to observe it as such, and the country warmly responded to their call. The programme included *Rakhi-Bandhan* ceremony and fasting. The domestic hearth was not to be lit; food was not to be cooked except for the sick and the invalid; the shops were to be closed, business was to be suspended; people were to walk barefooted and bathe in the Ganges in the early morning hours for purposes of purification. It was self-denying ordinance, but it was cheerfully accepted, and, as the sequel showed, the heart and soul of the nation were in it.

But this was not all. The day was to be marked by the inauguration of a plan of constructive work. Among those who proposed the building of a Federation Hall was Nivedita. This was to be the meeting-ground of the old province and its severed parts, the mark and symbol of their indivisible union. In this connection Sir Surendranath writes in his *A Nation in Making*: "The proposal was carefully considered, and it was warmly supported by Sir Taraknath Palit and Sister Nivedita, that benevolent lady who had consecrated her life to, and died in the service of India."

It was also decided to hold on that day a great demonstration in order to raise a National Fund, chiefly for the purpose of helping the weaving industry. Nivedita was in the know of all these things while she was convalescing at Darjeeling.

The day dawned. 16th October, 1905. It was the day on which the Partition of Bengal was to take place. The streets of Calcutta re-echoed from the early hours of the morning with the cry of *Bande-Mataram*, as band after band of men, young and old, paraded the streets on their way to bathe in the river, stopping at intervals to tie *rakhi* round the wrists of passers-by. Patriotic songs rent the morning sky. The bathing-ghats were crammed with a surging mass of men and women. Indeed, it was a day worth living for—a day of inspiration that perhaps comes only once in a life time. The meeting for laying the foundation-stone of the Federation Hall was held in the early hours of the afternoon. Long before the appointed hour, the grounds where the meeting was to be held were filled with a surging crowd, which flowed out into the streets, now rendered quite impassable. Fifty thousand people must have been present. Yet so quiet and orderly was this vast assemblage that not a policeman was required, and no policeman was to be seen. Ananda

Mohan Bose presided over the function under circumstances that bring tears in our eyes even today. A high-priest of nationalism as he was, Nivedita always cherished deep respect for Ananda Mohan and her contact with him had left deep impressions which she remembered till the last days of her life. Her respect for Ananda Mohan's patriotism found adequate expression in the obituary article which she wrote on the death of the former. Ananda Mohan was then an invalid. He was confined to his bed; but, as in the case of many other great men, the spirit rose above the ailments of the flesh; and despite his weakness and the deepening shadow of his approaching end, his interest in national affairs continued unabated. Carried in an invalid's chair, Ananda Mohan came to perform the function. The speech that he prepared on his sick-bed, is striking evidence of the triumph of mind and spirit over matter. It is regarded as the greatest of his oratorial performances. Indeed, it was the song of the dying swan. In course of his speech, Ananda Mohan said:

"Whereas the Government has thought fit to effectuate the Partition of Bengal in spite of the universal protest of the Bengalee nation, we hereby pledge and proclaim that we as a people shall do everything in our power to counteract the evil effects of the dismemberment of our province, and to maintain the integrity of our race. So God help us."

The ceremony over, the collection for the National Fund began in right earnest. A sum of Rs. 70,000/- was collected on that day and in the course of a few hours. The amount was made up of small subscriptions. It was the gift of the great middle class of Bengal and it was a spontaneous gift prompted by the emotions of the hour.

Such was the condition of Bengal from August to December, 1905 and Nivedita was all along at Darjeeling where she was kept informed about the happenings here. She returned to Calcutta in December to see for herself how the whole country was swept with excitement and unrest, the glimpses of which she had through the columns of the newspapers in her sick-bed at Darjeeling. Events had moved faster than she could imagine during these five months. Developments followed in quick succession in all sectors of the national awakening. But one thing did not escape her attention. It was the bitterness of feeling that prevailed on the camps of the moderates as well as of the extremists. Nivedita did not like such disunity in a struggle against an alien power. She appealed to the good-will of the leaders of both the camps. This appeal was issued by her just before the opening of the session of the Banaras Congress, December, 1905. She wrote: "What is the real function of the Congress? It must train its members in the new way of thinking which forms the basis of nationality. It must foster in them prompt and co-ordinated action. It must teach itself to emphasize the mutual sympathy which binds all the members of the vast family living between the Himalayas and Cape Comorin, between Manipur and the Persian Gulf."

Nivedita arrived Banaras three days before the session. She was eager to meet Gokhale and particularly Aurobindo. The President of the session was Gokhale. Bengal leaders knew about Nivedita's influence over Gokhale and other moderates. They approached her to request Gokhale to support the Boycott movement of Bengal from the open platform of the Congress. Gokhale had his presidential address revised by Nivedita who particularly told the president-elect to support the Boycott movement. Gokhale did as he was instructed to do. But

the dissension among the leaders was so much painful to her that in an article she wrote: "I do not like a movement of partisan politics at all, but a national, that is to say, a unanimous progression...The Congress represents, not a political, or partisan movement, but the political side of the national movement—a very different thing."

Nivedita and Aurobindo met for the second time at Banaras and a prolonged and behind-the-door discussion was held between them about the volcanic situation of the country. Once more she insisted on Aurobindo to come out of seclusion with a view to assume the leadership of the country for which the time was ripe. And once again, she repeated her promise: "Count on me, I am your ally."

The year 1906 saw Nivedita fully engrossed in the blazing conflagration of the Swadeshi movement. In the month of March the *Jugantar* was started as a language organ of the terrorist party which by this time had made considerable progress and its organisational work was going on in full swing under the supervision of Nivedita along with other trusted lieutenants. So long Upadhaya's *Sandhya* held the field along with the *New India* of Bipin Pal and the *Dawn* of Satish Mukherjee. But none of these organs could dare preach terrorism openly. So the necessity of another paper was felt and thus came out the *Jugantar*. Nivedita had been intimately connected with the publication of this paper. It was at her residence that Barindra Ghose and Bhupendranath Datta, the younger brother of Vivekananda, had discussed their plans and composed the first number. When the *Jugantar* appeared in its definite form, in March 1906, it represented the combination of many endeavours.

Then came the historic Barisal Conference (April, 1906). Nivedita was not present in this conference, for she had

other urgent and important works at Calcutta. When the news of the police oppression and arrest of the leaders of Barisal conference, reached Calcutta, Nivedita calmly received the news and began to devise ways and means to avenge it properly. The repression at Barisal served to accelerate the movement. The centre of storm was in Calcutta, where it raged with cyclonic force. College Square had its meetings almost daily while Nivedita was secretly engaged in hatching plots in consultation with Aurobindo who had by this time come to Calcutta for good after giving up the Baroda service. Indeed, the reports of the proceedings of the Barisal police flew like wild fire and deeply stirred popular feeling. The Press and the platform described the Barisal incident as 'hardly having any parallel in the history of British India.' In fact, soon after this the revolutionary movement made its appearance in concrete form in Bengal and history will one day reveal how far Sister Nivedita was responsible for this. In this connection Sir Surendranath writes in his *A Nation In Making*:

"The climax was reached when the police assaulted the delegates and dispersed the Conference at Barisal. The anarchical movement followed immediately. The public feeling was one of wild excitement...I have no hesitation in saying that the Partition of Bengal and the policy that followed it were the root causes of the movement in our province, though no doubt they were strengthened by economic conditions."

So Barisal was the turning point. All wings of the Nationalist party were now united; and the educated Islam joined hands with the Hindus on the Congress platform. Never did the prospects of effective and united work seem more helpful. Nivedita and Aurobindo carefully observed the currents of the politics in the country which had passed through the ordeal of fire in connection with the

anti-Partition and the Swadeshi agitation. Both of them knew the difficulties that surrounded a movement of defiance of authority culminating in the violation of official orders, legal or illegal. It was in this exciting circumstances that Tilak was invited to come to Calcutta to preside over the Shivaji Utsab celebration (June, 1906). The ambitious programme of national revolution inaugurated by Tilak created such enthusiasm that even beyond the country in Japan, Russia, Italy and France, patriots rose isolated or in groups to come to the help of India. Even in England the agitation had its partisans, the Hindu Students of Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh having gained to their cause influential journalists and even some members of the Houses. It was from the History of the Irish Revolution that the Hindus of the extremist party borrowed the term 'Nationalist' in order to clearly mark the character of the fight they were about to launch.

Aurobindo Ghosh was now in Calcutta, engaged in organising the extreme nationalist element in Bengal. The English organ of the nationalist party, *Bande Mataram* made its appearance (6th August, 1906); first as a weekly, then a daily. The first issue of the paper appeared with Aurobindo's article, "Absolute Autonomy Free from British Control" and the draft resolution of the doctrine of Passive Resistance. Besides Aurobindo, there were other fiery propagators of the new gospel of Nationalism, which included notably, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, Bepin Chandra Pal, Shyam Sunder Chakravarty, Krishna Kumar Mittra, Aswini Kumar Dutta, Rabindranath Tagore and Sister Nivedita. Aurobindo came out with a new interpretation of Bankim Chandra's celebrated song, 'Bande Mataram' which now leaped out of its comparative obscurity within the covers of a Bengali novel and in one sweep found itself on the lips

of every Indian, man or woman or child. Explaining the underlying sense of the song, Aurobindo wrote:

"The *mantra* had been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism. The Mother had revealed herself. Once that vision has come to a people, there can be no rest, no peace, no further slumber till the temple has been made ready, the image installed and the sacrifice offered. A great nation which has had that vision can never again bend its neck in subjection to the yoke of a conqueror."

In Calcutta, the main burden of knitting together the extremists and openly challenging the moderate school of thought fell upon Aurobindo and Nivedita. The Swadeshi agitation had given a great fillip to the extremist party and the repressive policy of the government had strengthened nationalism. Very soon the *Bande Mataram* became a very popular and powerful organ. It leapt into prominence throughout India and its inspiring message entered every patriot's home. Sedition was in the air. Two prosecutions for sedition was launched, one against some articles in the *Jugantar* and another against articles in the *Bande Mataram*. The government, however, was completely worsted in their attempt to prosecute either *Bande Mataram* or Aurobindo who was the power behind it. The editor of the *Jugantar*, Bhupendranath Datta, was prosecuted and sentenced on a charge of sedition. In this connection Dr. Bhupendranath Datta writes:

"Then came the turn of the present writer. He joined the revolutionary movement in 1903. In 1907, he went to jail on the charge of sedition as the Editor of the paper *Yugantar* which was the organ of the Revolutionary Party in Bengal. Sister Nivedita arranged bail for him and she also offered herself to stand surity for him."

Bhupendranath was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. When he bade good-bye to Sister Nivedita

before going to jail, he requested her to look after his mother in his absence. Nivedita never forgot to honour this request. She also made a presentation of Kropotkin's books to Bhupendranath to read during the solitary hours in the jail.

The direct and indirect collaboration of Nivedita with the *Bande Mataram* made her worthy to be invited by Tirumalacharya of Madras to direct the *Bala Bharati*. He wrote to her, "I wish to place it entirely at your disposal." Nivedita politely declined the offer. Another urgent work was awaiting her then. It was about to engage all her energy and attention. It was the training of the nationalists in the law of the Sinn Finn, that is to say, armed struggle. The nationalist sentiment was so acute in those days that sometimes it was rumoured that Gokhale had received one anonymous letter threatening him with life. Nivedita flew into rage. Running from one nationalist camp to another, she asked everybody, "Is it you who has done that? It is not possible! It is not the moment to tear one another."

Then came the devastating flood in East Bengal. Aswinikumar Dutt came to Calcutta to organise relief. He also claimed the services of Nivedita. The impression which Nivedita left on this 'uncrowned king' of Barisal has been expressed by Aswinikumar himself in the following words: "There was something flame-like about Sister Nivedita and not only her language but her whole vital personality often reminded me of glowing fire." So she accompanied Aswinikumar to the land of waterways. She rendered there excellent relief services which drew admiration from all quarters. It was against this background of flood and famine that the people of Bengal came to realise to what extent Nivedita can sacrifice herself without little caring for her personal health or comfort. She practically burst into tears when she saw

the hunger-stricken children in Barisal, exclaiming, "Hunger so keen, ah God! So keen! It is worth recalling Nivedita's remarks on famine in this connection:

"Famine is a social paralysis. Famine involves social disorganisation. Famine is many things beside hunger. But it is more than this as we have already seen nakedness, darkness at nightfall, ignorance...The beggar is spiritually twin brother to the millionaire...Floods doubling the disaster created by famine."

Nivedita again fell ill. This time it was Malaria. She returned to Calcutta sick. But rest was not for her. Again urgent call from Orissa where the famine-stricken people needed her services and sympathy. At once she went to Orissa even though she was suffering from acute cerebral fever. Returning from her Orissa tour, Nivedita fell terribly ill which prevented her from attending the Calcutta Congress that year. She left for Dum Dum to the garden house of Anandamohan Bose, for rest and treatment. On the eve of the Calcutta Congress in December 1906, Nivedita was laid up with cerebral fever. The terrible strain of these two illnesses completely shattered her magnificent constitution and physically she was never the same again. In fact, after this second illness, Nivedita did not seem to be the same woman. "Mother, what is Thy will? How many times again, Mother, shall I have to fight," so Nivedita used to muse during the silent hours on her sick bed at Dum Dum. It is to be noted here that Gokhale passed several nights by her bedside, crushing the ice which he applied to her. It was he who raised subscription from the members of the Congress to provide Nivedita with a fund for her medical treatment.

Calcutta became too hot for Nivedita. She herself was a suspect in the police eyes. Friends advised her to escape

to England, to avoid the possible arrest. She hesitated. She was not afraid of arrest or sentence; but what concerned her most was the organisation and supervision of the revolutionary movement then in full swing. Moreover Ramananda Chatterjee's *Modern Review* which was first seen on the stalls of the Congress Pandal in Calcutta, claimed her services as a contributor. 1907 dawned on a more agitated consciousness of the people. Nivedita associated herself with the *Modern Review* from its very birth and for full two years she contributed innumerable articles in the pages of the *Review*. Nivedita also completed another task this year. By the beginning of 1907 she completed her masterpiece, *The Master As I Saw Him*, after four years' of continuous writing. She took great care to consult Swami Vivekananda's letters, his papers, his projects of work, to write this book which, when completed, became a mirror in which was reflected the serene face of her Master. Three years later, the book was published from London. The immense popularity which the *Modern Review* gained was more or less due to Nivedita. She taught its editor the business of journalism, transformed his timid *Review* into a tribune of literary polemics with a great circulation. The prudent man and the audacious woman completed each other. Finally, in the month of August, 1907 Nivedita left India for two years of voluntary exile.

10

HER LAST YEARS

It was the same reason and under the same circumstances that made Prince Kropotkin to leave his country and to live in England, that made Nivedita to leave India by the middle of August, 1907. This is the usual practice with the revolutionaries. It is a time-honoured technique. Nivedita left India in the hope that she would be able to serve the cause of India by remaining outside India. She had made all the preliminary arrangements for the armed struggle in Bengal with the help of the band of young terrorists such as Barindra, Hemchandra, Ullaskar, Debabrata and many others who were inspired by the lofty ideals of freedom and initiated to the struggle for freedom both by Nivedita and Aurobindo. Her Baghbazar residence was the place where the revolutionaries used to come and confer with her; sometimes in the late hours of the night some of them would come and seek shelter, too. Thus from outside the house of the Sisters looked harmless, but during this time it was almost a volcano. It was from this tiny lane at Bose Para Lane that Sister Nivedita planned and conducted the armed struggle like an experienced general and yet so silently that the residents of the locality had never any inkling of it. It was far from their imagination that this innocent-looking Sister could be implicated with

the revolutionary movement that was going on in the country. Nivedita knew what had been the armed struggle in Ireland; at London she herself had participated in the rebellions, lived in the midst of proscribed persons before Swami Vivekananda tore her away from her narrow conception of revolution. She knew also how the course of events will turn and how the conflagration will spread if the repressive policy of the government continued unabated and unchecked. So long there was Aurobindo in the leadership of this armed struggle, Nivedita thought, the movement might not suffer any serious set back on account of her temporary absence. So she escaped to London one day in August, 1907.

Before she left for London, Nivedita took immense pain and care to teach Hemchandra and Ullaskar the technique of manufacturing explosives and to Barindra she taught how to get the seditious newspapers printed and circulated among the workers and the people. She knew its management. In her infancy she had seen tracts being printed in her family, she had turned the handle of the hand-press, and spread the ink on the frames, she knew the secret sheet of paper that circulated under the clothes with changed name. All these past experiences she carefully passed on to the young revolutionaries before she escaped from the field. The research laboratory of P. C. Ray, the renowned chemist and patriot, was the place where the boys used to get their first lesson in the manufacture of explosives from Sister Nivedita. She made all the necessary arrangements in this connection before she left Calcutta and the entire fund of the revolutionary party which was kept with her, was handed to Barindra. Thus before she left Calcutta, Nivedita took care to look at the details of each matter, so that her 'boys' may not feel any inconvenience in her absence. This shows the stuff with which she was built.

Her main concern was the fate of these young terrorists. How often did she remember that Rabindranath who was never inclined to terrorism and who had very often reproached Nivedita on account of her complicity with the armed movement, had cautioned her many a time, saying, "these boys have little faith in revolution; they are nothing without you". This was the one reason which prevented her from leaving India. Yet she had to go, not for her own safety, but to carry on the struggle from outside India with a view to accelerate the result here.

Before she left India, she had heard the news of deportation of Ajit Singh and Lajpat Ray of the Punjab. It was on this occasion that Aurobindo wrote the following in the columns of the *Bande Mataram*: "The time for speeches and fine writings is past. The bureaucracy has thrown down the gauntlet. We take it up. Men of the Punjab! Race of the Lion! No more words-words-words. Let us have deeds-deeds-deeds." Thus it will be seen that these two revolutionaries—Nivedita and Aurobindo—could give proper expression to the aspirations of the youth. When it was rumoured that the government was contemplating to deport Sister Nivedita, the leaders of the Nationalist Party prevailed on her to leave India immediately. Apart from her anxiety for the 'boys' engaged in the terrorist movement, her school also claimed her thought. She made the necessary arrangements for the school and left it to the care of Sister Sudhira and Sister Christine, her two able lieutenants. Thus Nivedita left India after making all the arrangements on all fronts.

So Nivedita left India at a time when her presence was all the more necessary. When the news of her escape reached the Police, the government breathed a sigh of relief; for they knew more than anybody else that Nivedita's influence over young Bengal was greater than

most people suspected, she probably did more to create an atmosphere of unrest than all the newspapers in the world.

Nivedita arrived in London where she was received cordially by Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss MacLeod who promised her help by all possible means. Dr. J. C. Bose and Lady Abala Bose also came to London at this time and Nivedita was delighted to see her old acquaintances here. She rented a house at Clapham Common which was a quiet place, a few miles away from London. Mr. Ratcliffe, the well-known journalist and a great friend of Nivedita, used to live at a little distance. Nivedita met him frequently, for she needed Ratcliffe's service very badly at this time to further the cause which she cherished most. At London she used to spend her time at the palatial residence of Mrs. Ole Bull in St. James Court. She also renewed her intimacy with Prince Kropotkin and discussed with him the situation in India. Thus London Society was, as it were a tonic to her, and she figured as an event in the reunions in London. Very soon she commenced her journalistic activities under the pen-name of *Nealus* and her topics of discussion centred around the current politics in India, while to the Calcutta papers Nivedita began to contribute articles which mainly expressed the reactions in London. "The doors of the House of Commons were opened to her whenever Indian affairs were on the agenda. She was not wasting her time."

Days went by. News from India grew worse. There was the Muzaffarpore Bomb outrage (1908, 30th April); there was the arrest of Aurobindo and others (1908, 2nd May); there was the assassination of Naren Gossain inside the jail (1908, 1st Sept.) by Kanai and Satyen who were duly prosecuted and hanged (10th and 23rd Nov., 1908); Tilak

had been sentenced to six years' imprisonment (July, 1908). Then came the news of the passage of the Newspaper Act which banned all the nationalist newspapers run by the extremists and the revolutionaries—*Jugantar*, *Sandhya*, *Navasakti*, *Bandemataram*—all have disappeared one after another. The reaction of these news was terrible on the mind of Nivedita and at once she decided to arrange for the re-publication of these suppressed newspapers from the different centres of Europe and their despatch to India. She evinced great tact and courage in this matter. News of the sentences of Bipin Chandra Pal and Maulavi Liaquat Hussain reached her, but when the terrible news of the death of Brahmabandhab Upadhaya (27 October, 1907) reached her, Nivedita simply burst into tears. Bipin Chandra arrived in London in August 1908 after the expiry of his six months' sentence and Nivedita lost no time to meet him with a view to ascertain from him the exact situation in Bengal.

Then after a brief visit to her birth-place in Ireland, Nivedita sailed for America. Mrs. Ole Bull bore all the expense. When she arrived there, she found most of the Bengal revolutionaries who were released last year, had assembled at the residence of Mrs. Ole Bull. Among them was Bhupendranath Datta who had escaped to India after the expiry of his eleven months' sentence. Nivedita stayed there for three months at the Cambridge residence of Mrs. Ole Bull. She thought to rehabilitate these emigrant revolutionaries properly. At first she thought of the French possessions in India where they might be settled, but where was the money? She began to collect fund by giving lectures for this purpose at Baltimore, Boston and New York. The close of the year 1908 brought her a shower of gold which Nivedita utilised in the education of these revolutionary young men; she even selected the curriculum for them, so keen was her interest for their

future welfare. This motherly love and affection made Nivedita what she was.

News reached her in America that her mother was in the death-bed. So Nivedita left America in the early part of 1909. Her mother was then with her younger sister at Workdale. The dying mother smiled when she saw her eldest daughter and she felt inwardly a sort of peace and calm which were so clearly reflected in her eyes. She died peacefully. Nivedita looked at the whole thing as a spectator without any emotion. This was her characteristic. As a faithful daughter, Nivedita performed the last rites of her mother. We have seen her at the death-bed of her Master and there she did not shed tears which surprised the Sanyasis at the monastery. Nivedita was all by herself, made of elements which were so rare.

Nivedita's attention was now drawn to the activities of the Indian Home Rule Society which was founded in 1905 by Shyamji Krishna Varma, a revolutionary from Kathiawar in Guzerat. Varma was then working in collaboration with Madam Cama and the organ of the Society was named *Indian Sociologist* which propagated the revolutionary ideas among the Indian residents in different places of Europe. Among the associates of Varma was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar who was then carrying on intense revolutionary activities in London and Paris as the most trusted and resourceful lieutenant of Varma. During the time of the Alipore Bomb Case, the London police several times searched the office of the *Indian Sociologist* which was then subsequently shifted to Paris. Varma had an elaborate plan to establish a number of terrorist centres in India in the line of the Russian Nihilists. It was therefore quite natural for Nivedita to be drawn to the activities of this group in London, for her objective was the same as that of Varma. Thus the revolutionary activities outside India grew in volume and

force during this period under the joint efforts of Varma, Nivedita and Madam Cama around whom the Indian revolutionaries had gathered. Nivedita personally supervised the centres of publications of the revolutionary organs and it was in this connection she afterwards came to Berlin and Geneva in the beginning of July, 1909. Here at Geneva she got the news of the assassination of Curzon Willey by one Madanlal Dhingra and it was from Geneva that Nivedita had the opportunity to read the statement of Dhingra. The statement interested her very much and she was all praise for this young revolutionary. In course of his statement, Dhingra said:

"I attempted to shed the English blood intentionally and of purpose as an humble protest against the inhuman transportations and hangings of Indian youth...I do not want to say anything in defence of myself, but simply to prove the justice of my deed. I hold the English people responsible for the murder of 80 millions of Indian people in the last 50 years, and they are responsible for taking away £100,000,000 every year from India to this country. Just as the Germans have no right to occupy England, so the English have no right to occupy India."

The statement thrilled her as it did other Indian revolutionaries in Europe. It was about this time that the Boses arrived in London from their American tour. Nivedita got this information and she also came to know that they will be leaving for India shortly. Nivedita was very much anxious to meet them with a view to accompany them to India. She was longing to return to her adopted motherland. She could feel the danger in the air and she was prepared to embrace it even at the risk of her life. Thus determined, Nivedita arranged for her return along with Jagadish Chandra. In disguise and under an assumed name (Mrs. Margot), Nivedita boarded the ship and left the shores of London

by the middle of July 1909 and it was in the same dress and under the assumed name she landed at Bombay port. She came to Calcutta by an indirect route across the country and for three weeks she did not come out of her abode in Bose Para Lane. Gradually she was in her forms and she began to move freely when the police surveillance over her place slackened to some extent.

During the period Nivedita was away from India, particularly from Calcutta—her main place of activity—much water had flown down the river Hooghly. She could easily feel the volcanic condition of Bengal. Unrest—whose historical name is revolt—was in the air. The period between the *Yugantar* case (in which its editor, Bhupendra Nath Datta was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment) and the murder of Sir Curzon Wylie in London, was a momentous period in the revolutionary history of Bengal. Nivedita assessed the situation with the dexterity of a general; she keenly observed everything. One day when a close associate of Upadhaya came to see her, Nivedita asked him about the statement which the late rebel had submitted before the prosecuting magistrate. "O, it was a unique piece of valiant protest," was the reply. "Could you get me a copy? I am dying to read it," said Nivedita. When the statement was procured, Nivedita read it with interest and her joy knew no bounds when he read the following concluding portion of this historic statement of Brahma-bandhab:

"I accept the entire responsibility of the paper (*Sandhya*) and the article in question (*Ekhan Thekey Gaychhi Premier Daye*). But I don't want to take any part in the trial because I do not believe that in carrying out my humble share of this God-appointed mission of *Swaraj*, I am in any way accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us and whose interest is and

must necessarily be in the way of our true national development."

What a spirited reply, thought Nivedita and once more she shed a few drops of tear in memory of her colleague. So he had died a free man as he very much desired. The country was without any leader at that time, for most of them were then deported, while the rest of the revolutionaries were transported to life or sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, and some going underground. Only Aurobindo then held the field. He emerged from Alipore Jail a changed man and stepped into a changed India. Jail had not only given him a vision of God but had also transformed him from a flaming agitator into a mature and serene political philosopher. This was the impression which Nivedita had when she met Aurobindo for the first time after her self-imposed exile from India. It was she for whom he too, had been waiting so long. Together they discussed the situation. Both of them saw that the steam roller of repression had silenced many a voice and stopped many a pen and sent all the topmost agitators to jail.

"I find all changed", Aurobindo said to Nivedita.

"But don't you realise that the enthusiasm once manifested through the million-throated shouts of *Bande Mataram* has become a sullen but ominous silence?" said Nivedita, fixing her gaze on Aurobindo with fond eagerness.

"Yes, without suffering there can be no growth," said Aurobindo calmly as was his nature.

"And without bloodshed no freedom," remarked Nivedita.

Bande Mataram had already ceased publication during the period of Aurobindo's incarceration. Coming out of the jail, he started a new organ for a fresh and deeper

gospel, with a view to organising the party on efficient lines and educating public opinion. It was *Karmoyogin*, a weekly in English. The editorial policy of the paper was explained by Aurobindo in the following lines:

"The *Karmoyogin* will be more of a national review than a weekly newspaper. We shall notice current events only as they evidence, help, affect or resist the growth of national life and the development of the soul of the nation."

Nivedita's keen intellect could easily discern that party politics was no longer Aurobindo's aim; it was rather the dissemination of the principles of *Sanatana Dharma*; it was rather the hourly practice of the *Karmayoga* taught by Sri Krishna in the Gita. And at the same time it also flashed in the mind of the disciple of Vivekananda that what is Karmayoga but the application of Vedanta to life! So there was complete affinity of idea between the two.

Aurobindo was on the field for ten months before retiring for good from active politics. But those ten months were full of activity, and brilliant contributions were made to constructive political thought, to Indian culture, to the gospel of nationalism, and above all, to the spiritual way of life, which he emphasised as peculiarly Indian.

Meanwhile, the Minto-Morley Reforms were in the air and with his intimate knowledge of the British people and their wares, Aurobindo had little doubt that the the Reforms were a mockery and a trap and that the co-operation expected from the people was not true co-operation but merely a parody of the same.

"Dont' you realise that the Reforms will only throw an apple of fresh discord among us?" asked Nivedita one day.

Aurobindo replied: "Most certainly. They are hollow and pretentious."

"Then why don't you warn the people against this offer of conciliation in one hand and the pressure of repression in the other?"

"I will do my best", but you will have to stand by me, won't you?", said Aurobindo.

So together they engaged themselves in this task. The breach between the extremists and the moderates was complete by this time since the Surat imbroglio. So they directed their appeal more to the moderates than to the nationalists. They insisted both by speech and in writing to reject the Reforms, for they were a trap and a mockery. But all in vain. The currents of history had then taken a definite turn and both Aurobindo and Nivedita realised for the first time that the country must wait for her next leader. In December 1909, a few months after the publication of the historic "Open Letter" (now considered as Aurobindo's "last political will and testament" to his countrymen), Aurobindo made this exhortation to his countrymen in the course of a statement to a bold programme of action:

"Let us then take up the work God has given us, like courageous, steadfast and patriotic men, willing to sacrifice greatly and venture greatly, because the mission also is great."

The year 1910 dawned. Meanwhile there were reliable intimations from Sister Nivedita that Aurobindo would again be arrested and this time his prize would be deportation. She had her own sources of knowledge. But these things never worried Aurobindo and with all the experience of his many prosecutions, he knew that he lived a charmed life and the net of bureaucracy was not capable of holding him. One thing was obvious however,

he could not stay in India and yet be out of and free from politics. So when on January 24th, 1910, the Deputy Superintendent of Police was shot dead in broad daylight, in the premises of the Calcutta High Court, Aurobindo wrote, commenting on the outrage that the terrorist outrages were doubtless on the increase, and for this the government had only to thank themselves; the wind of repression was yielding the fruit—the poisonous fruit—of the whirlwind of raging terrorism.

Here an incident in the life of Nivedita is worth mentioning. It was some times in March, 1910, that one day Lady Minto (wife of the then Viceroy Lord Minto), visited *in cognito* the place where Sister Nivedita used to live. The following extract from Lady Minto's journal relates the whole story:

"March 1, 1910—I have been much interested lately in penetrating into the poorest part of Calcutta to visit a Miss Noble, who has adopted the Indian mode of life. She is an idealist, and sees wonderful meanings in the Hindu religion, but it is difficult to follow her reasoning. I went *in cognito* with an American, a Mr. Phipson, and Victor Brooke (Military Secretary to the Viceroy) to see the school where Sister Nivedita teaches a class of girls. She says the people amongst whom she lives are high caste but intensely poor but very proud. I think she idealises their virtues. She has studied the evolution of the religious thought over thousands of years, and maintain that philosophy and knowledge originated in India.

"Sister Nivedita lives in the heart of the native city in a tiny house in a back alley. She has a charming face, with a very intelligent expression, and we made friends. She begged me to come and see the temple on the banks of the river where her Master, Swami Vivekananda, had worshipped and meditated for twelve years. A few days

later, I started in a hired motor with Victor Brooke, meeting Sister Nivedita enroute. We walked down till we came to a stone terrace facing the Hooghly. It was under a tree on this terrace that Swami Vivekananda sat. The spot was well chosen for meditation and looked beautiful in the light of the setting sun. The wonderful temple in which the image of Kali dwells seems to breathe peace and contentment; it was scrupulously clean.

"We were taken to see Swami Vivekananda's little bedroom. This room seemed to fill Nivedita's mind with holy thoughts. The afternoon was extremely interesting. Sister Nivedita sees beauty in all her surroundings, and has a wonderful knack of quoting Persian poems, applicable to the subject of conversation, which she recited in a charmingly high-pitched voice of reverent devotion."

Again there was strong rumour of Aurobindo's arrest. Nivedita insisted on this God-sent leader of India to decide for an escape to a place of safety. It was February and Aurobindo continued his work unabated and apparently unperturbed. Finally, Aurobindo agreed to the proposal of Nivedita to escape if only she agreed to undertake the editing of the *Karmoyogin*. For he knew that if there was anybody who could shoulder this responsibility, it was Sister Nivedita. She readily consented. Aurobindo was then ready for destination unknown. Soon the inner call came. The call was urgent and so one night in March, Aurobindo left for Chandernagore, under cover of darkness. Nivedita escorted him to the banks of the Ganges and bade him good-bye.

When the news of Aurobindo's escape was made public, there was a great sensation in the official circle. Again rumours were afloat that he had retired to the Himalayas while others said that he had been clapped

in prison. "Aurobindo is here"—so wrote Nivedita in a issue of the *Karmoyogin*, "his whereabouts have been withheld from the public since he wanted seclusion. The subsequent issues of the *Karmoyogin* were edited by Nivedita and in its issue dated the 12th March, 1910, she wrote the following soul-stirring prayer:

"I believe in India, one, indissoluble, indiviisble. National Unity rests on the foundation of common hearth, common interest, common love.

"I believe that the force which is expressed in the Vedas and the Upanishads, in the formation of religions and empires, in the science of savants and in the meditation of saints is born once more amongst us and has today the name of Nationality.

"I believe that present India has taken the plunge from deep roots in her past and that before her rises a glorious future.

"O Nationality! come to me! Bring me joy or sorrow, glory or approbrium, but grant that I may belong to thee!

Nivedita"

Chandernagore, so near to Calcutta, the storm-centre of the Indian political world, was considered unsafe and so Aurobindo decided to seek a more secluded spot. After secretly staying in Chandernagore for about a month at Matilal Roy's residence, he left the place and reached Pondicherry, on the 4th of April, 1910 under an assumed name. When the news of his safe arrival at Pondicherry reached Nivedita at Calcutta, she burst into tears of joy. Then in the issue of the *Karmoyogin* dated 10th April, she publicly announced the address of Aurobindo, thus settling all rumours and gossips about him forever.

11

THE END OF THE MISSION

WITH Aurobindo gone from the field, Nivedita felt lonely. She gave up all activities. She also felt a call for the mountains and she wanted to visit the holy places of Hardwar, Kedarnath and Badrinath. She expressed her desire to Jagadish Chandra and Lady Bose. The summer vacation was drawing near. They gladly agreed to accompany her. She spent the next two months (May and June) visiting these holy places. Her mind was overflowed with joy when she visited the places and the following extracts from her book, *The Northern Tirtha*, are worth quoting here.

"Above all, Kedarnath is the shrine of the Sadhus. As in the days of Buddhism, so in those of Sankaracharya, and as then so also now the yellow robe gleams and glistens in all directions. Badrinath itself, with its glaciers and snows, its velvet terraces and its silver moonlight, was enough."

Nivedita returned to Calcutta from her pilgrimage to Kedarnath and Badrinath. A few fine days in the holy hills comforted her and she now felt better, though exhausted. It was the month of July. Her mind was now full of serene peace. There was no more longing for any thing. She has fulfilled her mission entrusted to her by her Master. She has done in her own way what her Master

wanted her to do. She considered herself fortunate in her association with the leading men of the country which she has adopted as her motherland. A great nation with a great culture has welcomed her with all the warmth of its heart. She was privileged to take a glorious part in the national struggle of the country and how fondly she treasured her friendship with men like Rabindranath, Bipin Chandra, Aswinikumar, Aurobindo, Jagadish Chandra, Tilak, Gokhale and a host of others in various fields of politics, education, science, art and culture. She deemed it a great fortune to associate herself with the aspirations and activities of these intellectual giants whose names were destined to go down to history. Each of them, she thought, was a worthy son of Mother India.

Again, it was her rare privilege to mix intimately with such great women as Sarada Devi, Bhubaneswari Devi (the mother of her Master), Gopaler Ma, Jogin Ma, Abala Bose and host of others. She had learnt and unlearnt many things as a result of her association with each of them. She had shared with them their dreams and visions, hopes and aspirations. If the position of women in any society is a true index of its cultural and spiritual level, Nivedita reflected sometimes, then India has every reason to feel proud of her womenfolk. The history of India has unfolded to her a long procession through the ages of women who attained greatness in various spheres of life and culture—political and aesthetic, moral and spiritual. Perhaps this was the reason which had drawn her so intimately to Sarada Devi whose unbounded love and affection for Nivedita revealed itself in the endearing term "Khooki" by which she used to address her whenever there was any occasion to do so. Although her association with the Holy Mother was not so frequent, even though she lived near by, yet to

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Nivedita Sarada Devi epitomised all that was great and good in Indian womanhood. Living among the great women of India, Nivedita knew for certain what Indian woman was in the past and what she is at present, and what she may be in the future.

To Nivedita Sarada Devi was sweetness and purity incarnate. How often did she remember the illuminating observations of Vivekananda in respect of the divine consort of his Master, Ramakrishna. "Mother has been born to revive that wonderful Shakti in India; and making her the nucleus, once more will Gargis and Maitreyis be born into the world." In the searchlight of her Master's prophetic vision how many times Nivedita thrilled to see how a glorious era of real advancement of human civilization has been heralded by the advent of the Holy Mother. This sentiment of Nivedita in respect of Sarada Devi later on found beautiful expression in the following line: "To me it has always appeared that she is Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of Indian womanhood."

The memory of *Gopaler Ma* remained always fresh with Nivedita. In 1904 Gopal's mother (Aghormoni Devi) fell seriously ill and she had to be removed to the house of Balaram Bose in Calcutta. Sister Nivedita had been so charmed with her loving nature and spiritual experiences that she subsequently took her to her own residence at 17, Bosepara Lane, and nursed her with a daughter's love and care till the last moment of her life. She considered herself lucky to have the privilege of serving such a noble soul for a pretty long time.

For a long time Nivedita had cherished to write a biography of her Master and for this purpose she had collected huge materials from various sources. But she felt that she would not be able to complete the task; so

she handed over all the materials collected by her to the authorities of the Belur Math. There was one more work to do and that was to revise the English translation of Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen's *History of Bengali Language and Literature*. For a few days she kept herself busy with it and completed it. She had promised to write some more articles on Indian art and architecture for the *Modern Review* for which Ramananda Chatterjee was pressing her. She fulfilled that assignment which was her last literary effort worth mentioning. All these and various other minor works claimed her attention for the rest of the year.

January, 1911. Urgent call came to Nivedita from America. Mrs. Ole Bull was lying in her death-bed. She hurried there to see her in her last moment. She was more than a mother to Nivedita. In fact, Nivedita regarded Mrs. Ole Bull as her second mother. This noble Norwegian lady also loved Nivedita like her own daughter. Mrs. Bull had a special affection for the Indian scientist, Jagadish Chandra whom she used to look as her adopted son. Both Nivedita and Jagadish Chandra were indebted to the munificence of this rich pious lady. She bequeathed a sum of two thousand pound for the Nivedita Girls' School and three thousand pound for the Bose Institute. It was her last moment when Nivedita went to see Mrs. Ole Bull in America. She died shortly after. While at America, Nivedita was invited as a representative from India to join the International Congress at London in that year. She could not accept the invitation mainly for want of time. She returned to India in the month of June, 1911.

One day Nivedita went to see Bhubaneswari Devi and found her lying seriously ill. She had promised to Bhupendranath to look after his mother in his absence.

She now fulfilled the promise by nursing the ailing mother of her Master. Bhubaneswari died on the 25th of July, 1911. Nivedita accompanied the dead body to the burning ghat and from there she wrote a touching letter to Bhupendranath who was then living an exile's life somewhere in Europe. The death of Bhubaneswari Devi brought to her mind so many deaths she had already witnessed, the death of her own mother, of Mrs. Ole Bull, of Swami Sadananda, of *Gopaler Ma* and last but not the least the death of Ananda Mohan Bose. In course of an obituary article on the latter, Nivedita wrote: "Ananda Mohan Bose, born two hundred years earlier, would have been an Indian saint. Born in our own times, he became a citizen, the first citizen of Bengal. Citizenship is an ideal as high as sainthood."

For a few days she worked with singular haste—and also with her singular zeal which was usual with her.

"No more work! I want leave now", so said Nivedita one day to Sister Sudhira who noticed a tone of exhaustion in her words. Indeed she was feeling very tired, inwardly and outwardly. "I am leaving this Institution to your charge; it is a holy legacy we have from our Master, mind that."

Then she executed her Will which stated the following among other things:

"Clause No. 4—Any sums that may be paid to me or my executor by Mr. E. G. Thorp, Counsellor-at-Law of Boston, the sum of £300 or thereabouts invested for me by the Bank of Bengal, the sum of £700 to me by the Estate of late Mrs. Ole Bull, and the sale proceeds of all my books or copyrights thereof I bequeath to the Trustees of the Swami Vivekananda Math at Belur, who are to hold it as a perpetual fund for the National Education of Indian women according to national methods,

spending the income according to the advice of Miss Christiana Grunsthedel".

Again Nivedita fell ill. For years past she had not only neglected her own comfort, but simply overworked herself. But this time she did not talk about her illness to anybody. She knew by her premonition that her days were drawing near. She could almost feel it. Yet she deliberately abstained from having a regular treatment. A sort of indifference pervaded her mood; she was drawn inward and inward. In fact, Nivedita now entered upon an existence of quiet meditation.

While she thus lay ill at her Baghbazar residence, one day Jagadish Chandra came to see Nivedita, accompanied by his wife, Abala Bose. "You are not feeling well. Why not come with us to Darjeeling? You must rest," these were the first words of the scientist when he saw Nivedita's pale face.

Rest! smilingly Nivedita reflected to herself and then she said, "Where is the time for that? I do not see any need of it."

"But you have done enough work, now have some rest," said Abala Bose fondly.

"Enough work! Ah, the little done, the undone vast," came the prompt reply from the pale lips of Nivedita. Then, pausing a little, she said to Abala Bose, holding her both hands affectionately, "You better proceed first, I shall join you soon."

At last the repeated requests of her friends prevailed upon Nivedita. Finally she went to Darjeeling in the beginning of October, 1911. It was destined to be her journey's end. There at the "Ray Villa" the Boses were anxiously awaiting her. Soon after her arrival, Jagadish Chandra lost no time in arranging the necessary medical treatment. He sent for Dr. Bipin Bihary Sarkar and he also sent an urgent wire to Dr. Nilratan Sarkar in Calcutta.

In a couple of days Dr. Sarkar arrived. Both the physicians held a prolonged examination of the patient. They diagnosed blood dysentery in its extreme form. From the expressions on their grave faces, it was apparent to the Boses, that the prospect of her recovery was very little this time, for they knew how fatal the dysentery could be in a hilly climate. The condition of the patient did not permit her to be removed to the planes. It was too late. Their anxiety knew no bounds. Best possible medical treatment, however, was arranged for Nivedita while Abala Bose herself tenderly nursed her, day in and day out. Treatment and nursing went on, but life was in full flight from her tired body. Anxious moments dissolved into days and days into weeks. The physicians gave up their hopes. It was malignant dysentery and the chances of recovery were remote. Thus passed eleven days and all the time Nivedita lay on her death-bed with her mind absorbed in serene calmness. There was calm resignation—no impulse, no restlessness; only meditation and prayer.

A serene life filled the room. All thought of fear had fled. Nivedita felt beside her the presence of her Master showing her the way. She knew a quietness full of inner joy. For days Nivedita lived "without eating, ideally pure and beautiful, nourished with strange music, luminous rhythms, and the song of the earth". Abala Bose, on the other hand, never left her side; she understood the dying Nivedita's tearless serenity.

There was silence all around. The life in the 'Ray Villa' seemed suspended, stricken with immobility by the wonderful fact that Nivedita was about to die. The two doctors alternated in her room while Abala Bose sat all the time, silently nursing her. Sometimes Nivedita smiled with joy. And as Lady Bose assured her that she was going to be well soon, Nivedita said, looking at the open window, turning hopefully towards the sun and the motion-

less mountains: "Thy Will be done, O Mother! My mission is over!" She looked pale, yet her sweetness was without limit, which was the striking characteristic of her luminous nature. She often spoke of her own death. She commented upon the inevitable event with surprising calmness and considered its practical consequences. Death meant to her only change from one room to another. She often remembered the prophecy of her Master that she would not live beyond forty-four. Without emotion, she lay on her sick-bed. There was serenity and acceptance, in her. She remained almost silent for the rest of the days till the last moment came. The great and little worries of her work wandered aimlessly in her marvellous brain. Her last moments revealed the strength of her mind, of her robust heart, trapped in a body from which all heat was departing, which continued to beat tirelessly, implacably. All the time, she was, as it were, drawn inwardly. Outwardly she grew weaker, but inwardly she was calm and joyful. She was preparing herself for her final departure.

At last on the thirteenth of October at dawn, when the sun had set the mountains aglow and was beginning its journey across a beautifully pure autumn sky, when the full light of a glorious morning had filled the room, the bed and reached the pale forehead of Nivedita, the heart, at last, beat no more. It was early morning when Nivedita breathed her last murmuring: "The boat is sinking, but I may yet see the sunrise." All in white, her partly white hair laying bare the immense forehead, the face at peace, as grave and valiant as a knight in armour, with the Rudrakshya garland still held in the fingers of her right hand on the breast, Nivedita was, at this moment, the noblest and the most beautiful thing on earth.

Lady Abala Bose, who attended Nivedita all the time she was lying ill, has recorded her last moments in the following touching words:

"Years ago in a foreign land she had nursed me back to health; my opportunity had now come. We were full of hope but she knew that it was ordained otherwise. There was to be no sadness. Every morning bright smile and brave words greeted us. A few days before she came to Darjeeling she had printed to send to her friends a daily prayer for the world which she had rendered into English from ancient Buddhism. Perhaps she knew that it was a word of final farewell from one whose life had been a constant prayer for freedom.

"Her face shone with radiance as she recited:

'From the Unreal lead us to the Real!

From the Darkness lead us unto Light!

From Death lead us to Immortality!

Reach us through and through ourselves.

And ever more protect us,—O Thou Terrible—

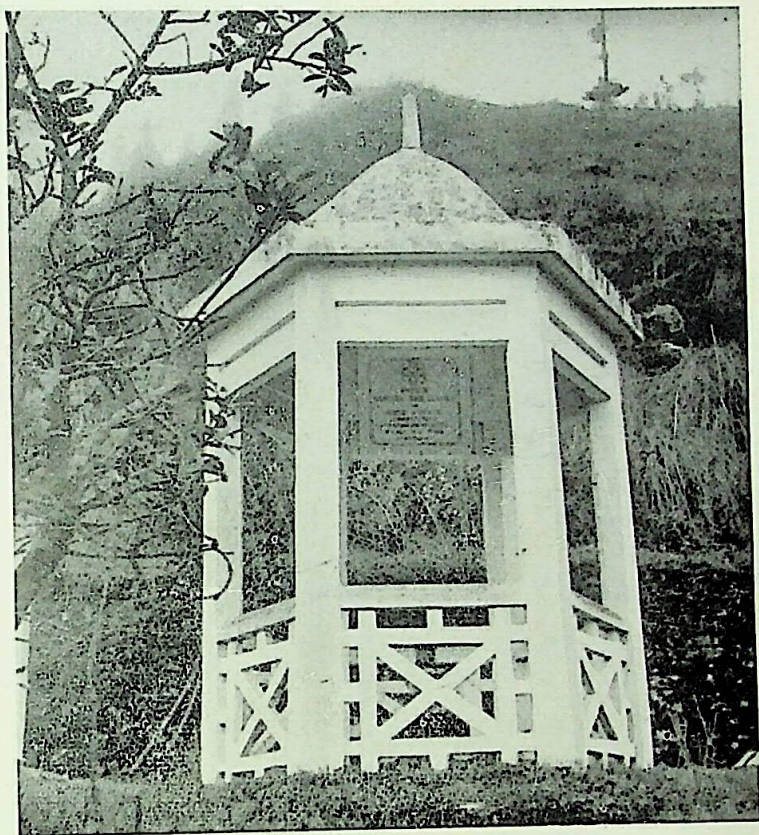
From Ignorance,

By Thy sweet compassionate Face.'

"The days had been full of cloud and mist, but there was a little parting of the clouds on the morning of the 13th October. She spoke of the frail boat that was sinking, but also that she was yet to see the sunrise. The sun had just risen over the snows when a shaft came streaming in and the great striving soul went forth to wake up in another dawn."

The following extract from the report of the special correspondent of the *Bengali*, dated 14.10.11. will tell the rest of the story:

"The Sister Nivedita died on October 13 at 7 A.M. She retained her consciousness till the last moment and spoke to the members of the Bose family with whom



HERE REPOSE THE ASHES OF SISTER NIVEDITA
(MARGARET E. NOBLE) OF THE RAMAKRISHNA-
VIVEKANANDA, WHO GAVE HER ALL TO INDIA
13 OCTOBER, 1911.

NIVEDITA MEMORIAL AT DARJEELING

she was living. Her last words were: 'The boat is sinking. But I shall see the sunrise.' The procession to the cremation ground started at 2 P.M. The public could be informed about the sad incident only two hours before the procession left 'Ray Villa' where the Sister lived. All the leading Hindu ladies and gentlemen in the town showed respect to the deceased Sister by joining in the procession. Among those who joined the procession were Dr. J. C. Bose, P. C. Roy, Bhupendranath Bose (Hon'ble), Principal Sashi Bhushan Datta, Prof. S. C. Mahalanabis, Dr. Nilratan Sarkar, Dr. and Mrs. Bipin Behary Sarkar, Sailendranath Banerjee, Bar-at-Law, Indu Bhusan Sen, Bar-at-Law, Mr. P. Edgar, Miss Piggot, Mrs. M. N. Banerjee, Mrs. Mrigendralal Mitra, Miss Sarkar, the Misses Sen, Miss Haldar, Miss Ghose, Miss Mitra, Surendranath Bose, Rai Nishikanto Sen Bahadur, Govt. Pleader of Purnea, Bosiswar Sen, Rupendranath, Editor, *Darjeeling Advertiser*.

"As the procession reached the Cart Road, above the Court House, it increased in volume and shortly afterwards became the largest and most imposing funeral procession Darjeeling had ever seen. The people in the market place stood in row and every head was uncovered when the procession passed between them slowly and solemnly towards the Hindu cremation ground. In the last stage, the dead body was carried on the shoulders of the Hindu gentlemen. It reached cremation ground at 4 P.M. After the head and face of the deceased had been washed with the holy water of the Ganges and her body sprinkled with the same, the body was placed on the pyre with the head towards the north, amidst the usual shouts of 'Bolo Hari, Hari Bol'. One of the members of Ramakrishna Mission (Ganen Maharaj) took the imprint of her feet and then performed the ceremony of 'Mukhagni' (applying fire to the lips) with alighted

torch and set fire to the pyre. The funeral pyre was then lighted which gradually blazed up, consuming the body, covered with yellow flowers, amidst the silence of her friends while one of them recited the vedic prayer. The burning pyre was put out with water at 7 P.M. and ashes were collected. The procession left the cremation ground at 8 P.M."

Thus died Nivedita, the spiritual daughter of Swami Vivekananda. The blazing fire was thus extinguished. All that remained of her was a handful of ashes—ashes of a noble life nobly lived. She came to India to serve her people and finally she lay down in rest at the feet of the Himalayas which was befitting to her life. Thus ends the story of a splendid life and there remains now very little to be told. A great and noble life, such as we have seldom seen, was thus sacrificed at the altar of Mother India in the true sense of the term. It was a unique example of consecration in the recent history of our country and we have every reason to feel ourselves proud of this spiritual daughter of Swami Vivekananda who inspired her at the prime of her youth to the life of renunciation and service for India. Though born in a foreign land with different cultural traditions and ideologies, Nivedita overcame her personal predilections and prejudices by her singleness of purpose, courage of conviction, respect for her Master and love for her adopted country. She came to India at a time when it needed the shaping influence of such a dynamic personality. There was indeed no field of activity in the corporate life of the people which did not feel the impact of her stimulating thought. Even great leaders of the land, renowned artists, politicians, educationists and scientists of her day—were indebted to her for the wealth of her original thinking and patriotic vision in their respective spheres. A versatile genius.

gifted with many qualities of head and heart, she identified herself whole-heartedly with the national aspirations of India. She became in spirit and action the spiritual child of Swami Vivekananda, and was rightly called Nivedita, the Dedicated One, inasmuch as she dedicated herself to the great mission of her Master.

Nivedita dreamt noblest dreams. Her dauntless spirit and unflinching faith, her heroic self-sacrifice and splendid contributions to the renaissance of India, are our valued possessions today. Today she has passed from life to history and may we follow in her footsteps to bring her back from history to life. May her life and character serve as a source of inspiration for the women of today.

Here was a soul full of love and it was not a flushed and violent love, like ours, and like world's but a gentle peace that brought good to every one and wished ill to none. It was a golden radiance, full of play. Surely Nivedita was the most wonderful thing of God, a child of Nature. For fourteen years love and sympathy for the people of India, and particularly for our women-folk, overflowed from the heart of Nivedita. It is this love and sympathy that will immortalise her name in the annals of our history. The simple epitaph on her memorial at Darjeeling truly sums up the life-story of Nivedita: "Here repose the ashes of Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India."

PART II

WORKS

THE MASTER AS I SAW HIM

Of all her works this is the masterpiece of Sister Nivedita. It is a unique book in the history of the world literature even, particularly in the sphere of biographical literature. In this book she records in a remarkable style the story of her life since the day she first met her Master in London up to the period of the passing away of Swami Vivekananda. Both Nivedita and her Master are projected in the pages of this book in a manner which is more reminiscent than narrative or descriptive, although there is enough narration as well as description to captivate the reader. As a spiritual biography of the two great souls, the book is almost unrivalled. For sheer mastery of style, the book is worth reading, again and again. We find Nivedita here in the role of Boswell and indeed, she may be aptly called the Boswell of Vivekananda. And, again, like Nevinson, she has drawn a beautiful portrait of her Master here, in this book. The book was first published in London in 1910 and the London Press acclaimed it almost unanimously as a great work. Reviewing this book, Mr. T. K. Cheyne of Oxford University wrote in the January (1911) issue of the Hibert Journal: "It may be placed among the choicest religious classics, below the various scriptures, but on the same shelf with the *Confessions of Saint Augustine*, and Sabatler's *Life of Saint Francis*."

It took Nivedita four years to complete the book, and before commencing to write, she took great pains to collect Vivekananda's letters, his papers, his projects of work and his poems. It is reported that the Sister was sometimes overwhelmed in her pursuit till her mind served as a mirror in which reflected the serene face of her Guru. She has recorded and analysed every word, every utterance, nay, every footstep of her Master with great care and sympathy, and understanding.

In short, *The Master as I Saw Him* is a fine and earnest tribute of Nivedita's love and gratitude to her Guru. About this book, Sir Jadunath wrote:

"How great Vivekananda was we can realise—as far as is now possible—in his very words as faithfully recorded by his disciple. Of his many words, his varied teachings, and his yarnings and struggling, a full history is impossible. But in this book, we can feel that he was a Master indeed, a living fountain of inspiration."

The book went into several editions and the first Indian edition came out in 1918 and since then there have been as many as six editions, the sixth edition coming out in 1943. A Bengali translation of this important work of Sister Nivedita was long overdue and it was only in 1954 that the Bengali translation of it was published for the first time.

The book consists of twenty-seven chapters. In the first chapter Nivedita relates her first meeting with her Master in London in 1895 and the last chapter closes with a touching narration of the passing away of the Swami in 1902. The rest of the chapters describe her associations with her Master and accounts of her travels to the northern pilgrimages accompanied by Swami Vivekananda and her training under her Master and also the views of the Swami on a number of subjects which he used to teach and discuss with his Western disciples during their stay at Belur and elsewhere.

Since I have already given extensive and frequent quotations from this work in the first part of this book, no useful purpose, therefore will be served to recapitulate or to repeat them here. I therefore give below only some excerpts from the fifteenth chapter of the book which relates to Swamiji's views on Hinduism.

ON HINDUISM

"The Swami was constantly preoccupied with the thought of Hinduism as a whole, and this fact found recurring expression in references to Vaishnavism. As a Sannyasin, his own imagination was perhaps dominated by the conceptions of Shaivism. But Viashnavism offered him a subject of perpetual interest and analysis. The thing he knew by experience was the truth of the doctrine of Advaita. The symbols under which he would seek to convey this were monastic ideal and the worship of the Terrible. But these were truths for heroes. By their means, one might gather an army. The bulk of mankind would always think of God as a Divine Providence, a tender Preserver, and the question of questions was how to deepen the popular knowledge, of the connection between this type of belief and the highest philosophy. With regard to the West, indeed, the bridges had actually to be built. Advaita had to be explained and preached. But in India, all this had been done long ago. The facts were universally admitted. It was only necessary to renew realisation, to remind the nation of the interrelation of all parts of its own faith, and to go again and again over the ground, in order to see that no weak point remained, in the argument by which Vaishnavism was demonstrated to be as essential to the highest philosophy, as that philosophy was acknowledged to be, to it.

"Thus he loved to dwell on the spectacle of the historical emergence of Hinduism. He sought constantly

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for the great force *behind* the evolution of any given phenomenon. Where was the thinker behind the founder of a religion? And where, on the other hand, was the heart to complete the thought? Buddha had received his philosophy of the five categories—form, feeling, sensation, motion, knowledge—from Kapila. But Buddha had brought the love that made the philosophy live. Of no one of these, Kapila had said, can anything be declared. For each is not. It but was, and is gone. 'Each is but the ripple on the waters. Know, O man! thou art the sea!'

"Krishna, in his turn, as the preacher and creative centre of popular Hinduism, awoke in the Swami a feeling which was scarcely second to his passionate personal adoration of Buddha. Compared to his many-sidedness, the Sannyas of Buddha was almost a weakness. How wonderful was the Gita! Reading it, as a boy, he would be stopped every now and then by some great sentence, which would go throbbing through his brain for days and nights. 'They who find pleasure and pain the same, heat and cold the same, friend and foe the same!' And that description of the battle too!—with the opening words of Krishna, 'Ill doth it befit thee, Arjuna, thus to yield to unmanliness!' How strong! But besides this, there was the beauty of it. The Gita, after the Buddhist writings, was such a relief! Buddha had constantly said, 'I am for the People!' And they had crushed, in his name, the vanity of art and learning. The great mistake committed by Buddhism lay in the destruction of the old.

"For the Buddhist books were torture to read. Having been written for the ignorant, one would find only one or two thoughts in a huge volume. It was to meet the need thus roused, that the Puranas were intended. There had been only one mind in India that had foreseen this need, that of Krishna, probably the greatest man who ever lived. He recognises at once the need of the People,

and the desirability of preserving all that had already been gained. Nor are the Gopi story and the Gita the only forms in which he reached the ignorant. For the whole Mahabharata is his, carried out by his worshippers, and it begins with the declaration that it is for the People.

"Thus is created a religion that ends in the worship of Vishnu, as the preservation and enjoyment of life, leading to the realisation of God.....In India, in every age, there is a cycle of sects which represents every gradation of physical practice, from the extreme of self-torture to the extreme of excess. And during the same period will always be developed a metaphysical cycle, which represents the realisation of God as taking place by every gradation of means, from that of using the senses as an instrument, to that of the annihilation of the senses. Thus Hinduism always consists, as it were, of two counter-spirals, completing each other, round a single axis.

"At the present moment, we may see three different positions of the national religion—the orthodox, the Arya Samaj, and the Brahmo Samaj. The orthodox covers the ground taken by the Vedic Hindus of the Mahabharata epoch. The Arya Samaj corresponds with Jainism, and the Brahmo Samaj with the Buddhists. India is a young and living organism. Europe also is young and living. Neither has arrived at such a stage of development that we can safely criticise its institutions. They are two great experiments, neither of which is yet complete. In India we have social communism, with the light of Advaita—that is spiritual individualism—playing on and around it; in Europe, you are socially individualists, but your thought is dualistic, which is spiritual communism. Thus the one consists of socialist institutions, hedged in by individualistic thought, while the other is made up of

individualist institutions, within the hedge of the communistic thought.

* * * *

"His mind was extraordinarily clear on the subject of what he meant by individualism. How often has he said to me, 'You do not understand India! We Indians are MAN-Worshippers, after all! Our God is Man!' He meant here the great individual man, the man of self-realisation Buddha, Krishna, the Guru, the Mahapurusha. But on another occasion, using the same word in an entirely different sense, he said, 'This idea of man-worship exists in nucleus in India, but it has never been expanded. You must develop it. Make poetry, make art, of it. Establish the worship of the feet of beggars, as you had it in Mediaeval Europe. Make man-worshippers.'

"He was equally clear, again, about the value of the image. 'You may always say,' he said, 'that the image is God. The error you have to avoid, is to think God the image.' He was appealed to, on one occasion, to condemn the fetichism of the Hottentot. 'I do not know,' he answered, 'what fetichism is!'

"But while every sincere ejaculation was thus sacred to him, he never forgot for a moment the importance of the philosophy of Hinduism. And he would throw perpetual flashes of poetry into the illustration of such arguments as are known to lawyers. How lovingly he would dwell upon the Mimansaka philosophy! With what pride he would remind the listener that according to Hindu *savants*, 'the whole universe is only the *meaning* of words. After the word comes the thing. Therefore, the idea is all!' And indeed, as he expounded it, the daring of the Mimansaka argument, the fearlessness of its admissions and the firmness of its inferences, appeared as the very glory of Hinduism. There is assuredly no evasion of the logical issue in a people who can say, even while

they worship the image, that the image is nothing but the idea made objective; that prayer is powerful in proportion to the concentration it represents; that the gods exist only in the mind, and yet the more assuredly exist. The whole train of thought sounded like the most destructive attack of the iconoclast, yet it was being used for the exposition of a faith!

"But his references to philosophy did not by any means always consist of these epicurean tit-bits. He was merciless, as a rule, in the demand for intellectual effort, and would hold a group of unlearned listeners through an analysis of early systems, for a couple of hours at a stretch, without suspecting them, of weariness or difficulty. It was evident, too, at such times, that his mind was following the train of argument in another language, for his translations of technical terms would vary from time to time.

"In this way he would run over the six objects with which the mind has to deal, in making up the universe according to the Vaisheshik formulation. These were substance, (Substance, according to the Vaisheshik, consists of the four elements, time, space, mind and soul.) quality, action, togetherness, classification or differentiation, inseparable inherence as between cause and effect, parts and the whole. With this he would compare the five categories of Buddhism,—form, feeling, consciousness reaction and *vidya*, or judgment. The Buddhist made form the resultant of all the others, and nothing by itself; the goal, therefore, for Buddhism, was beyond *vidya* (which Buddhism called *prajna*), and outside the five categories. Side by side with this, he would place the three illusive categories of the Vedanta (and of Kant)—time, space, and causation (*Kala-desh-nimitta*) appearing as name and form, which is *Maya*, that is to say, neither existence nor non-existence. It was clear,

then, that the seen was not, according to this, a being. Rather is it an eternal, changeful process. Being is one, but process makes this being appear as many. Evolution and involution are both alike in Maya. They are certainly not in Being (Sat), which remains eternally the same.

"Nor would Western speculations pass forgotten, in this great restoration of the path the race had come by. For this was a mind which saw only the seeking, pursuing, enquiry of man, making no arbitrary distinctions as between ancient and modern."

THE WEB OF INDIAN LIFE

THIS is the second important work of Sister Nivedita which won for her universal admiration as soon as it was published, in the year 1904. The book went into several editions in course of a short time. The original publishers of this book were Longmans and they retained the book till 1918. The first Indian edition of this book came out in October, 1950. Most of the articles in this book first appeared in Bipin Chandra Pal's "New India." This book is dedicated to Swami Vivekananda in the following words: "*Wah Guru Ki Fateh! Victory To The Guru; For the firm establishment of National Righteousness.*" The Author's Note to the book is as follows:

"In sending this book out into the world, I desire to record my thanks to Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt for his constant interest and encouragement, and also to Prof. Patrick Geddes, who by teaching me to understand a little of Europe, indirectly gave me a method by which to read my Indian experiences."

And what are these experiences? An intimate and first hand knowledge about the manners and customs of Indian life and thought which Nivedita gathered from various sources. It is here in this brilliant book that we

find her as one of the greatest interpreters of the ideals, culture, religions, and customs and manners of India. The immense influence exercised by her writings has been testified to by great men like Rabindranath Tagore and others of her time. It is needless to say that these writings of Nivedita have an importance transcending the times in which they were written, and that not only we Indians can see ourselves in the sympathetic searchlight of her keen intellectual analysis—an analysis that shows our strong points without failing to point out our weaknesses—but foreigners, Westerners particularly, will have the great advantage of understanding India and her ideals as seen through the spectroscope of a Western master-mind; for Nivedita brought to her task years of hard work, painstaking observation and serious reflection, and her training under Swami Vivekananda, and Prof. Patrick Geddes eminently fitted her to get a proper insight into the inner meaning of the historical life and culture of the people among whom she lived and worked.

The Web of Indian Life is a book in which Sister Nivedita has given us pictures of the Indian woman in her role as mother and wife and as the feeder and sustainer of the national culture and traditions; the author then enters into a study of the national epics, the caste system, and various other aspects of Indian life and ideals, and gives a brilliant sketch of Indian thought and what it stands for. Her observations are as valuable and instructive for us now as they were when they were first written.

The importance of the book lies in the fact that Rabindranath wrote of his own accord an introduction to it. In course of his introduction, the Poet says:

"And this was the reason which made us deeply grateful to Sister Nivedita, that great-hearted Western woman, when she gave utterance to her criticism of Indian life. She had won her access to the inmost heart of our society by her supreme gift of sympathy. She did not come to us with the impertinent curiosity of a visitor, nor did she elevate herself on a special high perch with the idea that a bird's eye view is truer than the human view because of its superior aloofness. She lived our life and came to know us by becoming one of ourselves. She

became so intimately familiar with our people that she had the rare opportunity of observing us unawares. As a race we have our special limitations and imperfections, and for a foreigner it does not require a high degree of keen-sightedness to detect them. We know for certain these defects did not escape Nivedita's observation but she did not stop there to generalise, as most other foreigners do. And because she had a comprehensive mind and extraordinary insight of love she could see the creative ideals at work behind our social forms and discover our soul that has living connexion with its past and is marching towards its fulfilment.

"But Sister Nivedita, being an idealist, saw a great deal more than is usually seen by those foreigners who can only see things, but not truths...Those who have not this vision merely see events and facts, and not their inner association. Those who have no ear for music, hear sounds, but not the song...Facts can easily be arranged and heaped up into loads of contradiction; yet men having faith in the reality of ideals hold firmly that the vision of truth does not depend upon its dimension, but upon its vitality. And Sister Nivedita has uttered the vital truths about Indian life."

It should be noted here that Rabindranath's introduction to the book was added at a much later date and long after the death of its author, when a new edition of the book came out in 1918.

In the opinion of A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Web of Indian Life* is almost the only fair account of Hindu Society written in English.

The contents of the book are as under:

The Setting of the Warp; The Eastern Mother; Of the Hindu Woman as Wife; Love Strong as Death; The Place of Woman in the National Life; The Immediate Problems of the Oriental Woman; The Indian Sagas; Noblesse Oblige: A Study of Indian Caste; The Synthesis of Indian Thought; The Oriental Experience; The Wheel of Birth and Death; The Story of the Great God: Siva or Mahadev; The Gospel of the Blessed One; Islam in India; An Indian Pilgrimage and On The Loom of Time.

THE EASTERN MOTHER

"What we want is that epic of motherhood, of which each separate mother and her child are but a single line or stanza, that all-compelling imagination of the race, which must for ever be working itself out through the individual. The very word 'mother' is held to be sacred, and good men offer it to good women for their protection. There is no timely service that may not be rendered to one, however young or beautiful, by the passing stranger, if only he first address her thus. Even a father, looking at some small daughter, and struggling to express the mystery of futurity that he beholds in her, may address her as 'little mother.' And the mother of the nation, *Uma Haimavati*, is portrayed always as a child, thought of always as a daughter of the house. In motherhood alone does marriage become holy; without it, the mere indulgence of affection has no right to be. This is the true secret of the longing for children. And to reach that height of worship in which the husband feels his wife to be his mother, is at once to crown and end all lower ties.

"Who that has ever watched it can forget a Hindu woman's worship of the Holy Child? A small brass image of the Baby Krishna lies, or kneels at play, in a tiny cot, and through the hours of morning, after her bath and before her cooking, the woman, who may or may not herself be wife and mother, sits offering to this image flowers and the water of the bath, fruits, sweets, and other things—her oblations interspersed with constant act

of meditation and silent prayer. She is striving to worship God as the Child Saviour, struggling to think of herself as the Mother of God. She is ready enough to give her reason, if we ask her. 'Does my feeling for my children change according to what they do for me?' She questions in return: 'Even so should one love God. Mothers love most those who need most. Even so should one love God.' The simple answer is worth a world of theology. Nor is it forgotten presently that the other children, made of flesh and blood, and answering to her call, are likewise His images. In every moment of feeding, or training, or play, of serving or using or enjoying, she may make her dealing with these an act of devotion. It was her object, during the hours of worship, to come face to face with the Universal Self. Has she done this, or has she brooded over the ideal sentiment till she has made of herself the perfect mother?

"By her child, again, her intention can never be doubted. She may turn on him now a smile and then a face of sorrow, now a word of praise and again an indignant reproach. But always, equally, she remains the mother. The heart of hearts of her deed is unfailing love. She knows well, too, that nothing her babies do can mean anything else. The sunny and the petulant, the obedient and the wilful, are only seeking so many different ways to express a self-same dependence. To each she accords the welcome of his own nature. In such a reconciliation of opposites, in such a discovery of unity in variety, lies the whole effort and trend of Eastern religion.

"For what thought is it that speaks supremely to India in the great word 'Mother'? Is it not the vision of a love that never seeks to possess, that is, content simply be—a giving that could not wish return: a radiance that we do not even dream of grasping, but in which we are

content to bask, letting the eternal sunshine play around and through us?

"And yet, and yet, was there ever an ideal of such strength as this, that was not firm-based on some form of discipline? What, then, is the price that is paid by Hindu women for a worship so precious? The price is the absolute inviolability of marriage. The worship is, at bottom, the worship of steadfastness and purity. If it were conceivable to the Hindu son that his mother could cease for one moment to be faithful to his father—whatever the provocation, the coldness, or even cruelty, to which she might be subjected—at that moment his idealism of her would become a living pain. A widow remarried is no better in Hindu eyes than a woman of no character, and this is the case even where the marriage was only betrothal, and the young *fiancée* has become what we know as a child-widow.

"This inviolability of the marriage tie has nothing whatever to do with attraction and mutual love. Once a wife, always a wife, even though the bond be shared with others, or remain always only a name. That other men should be only as shadows to her, that her feet should be ready at all times to go forth on any path, even that of death, as the companion of her husband, these things constitute the purity of the wife in India. It is told of some wives with bated breath, how, on hearing of the approaching death of the beloved, they have turned, smiling, and gone to sleep, saying, 'I must precede, not follow!' and from that sleep they never woke again.

"But if we probe deep enough, what, after all, is purity? Where and when can we say it is, and how are we to determine that here and now it is not? What is there sacred in one man's monopoly? Or if it be of the mind alone, how can any physical test be rightly imposed?

"Purity in every one of its forms is the central pursuit of Indian life. But even the passion of this search grows pale beside the remorseless truthfulness of Hindu logic. There is ultimately, admits India, no single thing called purity: there is the great life of the impersonal, surging through the individual, and each virtue in its turn is but another name for this.

"And so the idea of the sanctity of motherhood, based on the inviolability of marriage, finds due and logical completion in the still greater doctrine of the sacredness of religious celibacy. It is the towering ideal of the super-social life—'As Mount Meru to a fire-fly' compared to that of the house-holder—which gives sanction and relation to all social bonds. In proportion as the fact of manhood becomes priesthood, does it attain its full glory; and the mother, entering into the prison of a sweet dedication, that she may bestow upon her own child the mystery of breath, makes possible in his eyes, by the perfect stainlessness of her devotion, the thought of that other life whose head touches the stars."

OF THE HINDU WOMAN AS WIFE

"The Indian bride comes to her husband much as the Western woman might enter a church. Their love is a devotion, to be offered in secret. They know well that they are the strongest influence, each in other's life, before the family there can be no assertion of the fact. Their first duty is to see that the claims of others are duly met, for the ideal is that a wife shall, if that be possible, love her husband's people as she never loved her own; that the new parents shall be more to her than the old; that she can bring no gift into their home so

fair as a full and abundant daughterhood and a confirmation of their supreme place in their son's love. Both husband and wife must set their faces towards the welfare of the family. This, and not that they should love each other before all created beings, is the primal intention of marriage.

"Yet for the woman supreme love also is a duty. Only to the man his mother must stand always first. In some sense, therefore, the relation is not mutual. And this is in full accordance with the national sentiment, which stigmatises affection that asks for equal return as 'shopkeeping.' When her husband is present or before honoured guests the young wife may not obtrude herself on the attention of her elders. She sits silent, with veil down, plying a fan or doing some little service for the new mother. But through the work of the day she is a trusted helpmeet, and the relation is often very sweet. Nothing is so easy to distinguish as the educational impress of the good mother-in-law. Dignity, with gaiety and freedom, is its great future. The good breeding of the Hindu woman is so perfect that it is not noticed till one comes across the exception—some spoilt child, perhaps, who, as heiress or beauty has been too much indulged; and her self-assertiveness and want of restraint, though the same behaviour might seem decorous enough in an English girl of her age, will serve as some measure for the real value of the common standard.

"It is not merely in her quietness and modesty, however, that the daughter-in-law betrays good training. She has what remains with her throughout life—a *savoir faire* that nothing can disturb. I have never known this broken; and I saw an extraordinary instance of it when a friend, the shyest of orthodox women, consented to have her photograph taken for one who begged it with urgency. She stipulated, naturally, that it should be done

by a woman. But this was found to be impossible. 'Then let it be an Englishman,' she said with a sigh evidently shrinking painfully from the idea of a man, yet feeling that the greater the race-distance the less would be the impropriety. The morning came, and the Englishman arrived, but in the Indian gentlewoman who faced him there was no trace of self-consciousness or fear. A superb indifference carried her through the ordeal, and would have been a sufficient protection in some real difficulty.

"In a community like that of the Hindu home—as in all clan-systems—the characteristic virtue of every member must be a loyal recognition of common duties and dangers. And this is so. The wife who refused to share her husband's obligation to a widowed sister and her children was never known in India. Times of stress draw all parts of the vast group together; none of the blood can cry in vain for protection and support: 'even a 'village-connection' (i.e., one who is keen by association only) finds refuge in his hour of need. This great nexus of responsibility takes the place of workhouse, hospital, orphanage, and the rest. Here the lucky and the unlucky are brought up side by side. For to the ripe and mellow genius of the East it has been always clear that the defenceless and unfortunate require a *home*, not a *barrack*.

"Into this complex destiny the bride enters finally, about her fourteenth year. Till now she has been a happy child, running about in freedom, feet shod and head bare, eating and drinking what she would. Till now, life has been full of indulgences—for her own parents, with the shadow of this early separation hanging over them, have seen no reason for a severity that must bring in its train an undying regret. From the moment of her betrothal, however, the girl's experience gradually changes. There grows a subtle atmosphere of recollected-

ness about the newly married girl. The hair is parted, no longer childishly parted back; and at the parting—showing just beyond the border of the veil with which her head is now always covered—appears a touch of vermilion, put there this morning as she dressed in token that she wished long life to her husband; much as one might, in taking up a fan, blow a kiss from its edge to some absent beloved one. The young wife's feet are unshod, and the gold wedding bracelet on the left wrist, and a few ornaments appropriate to her new dignity, supply the only hint of girlish vanity. But she has more jewels. These that she wears daily are of plain gold, more or less richly worked, but on her wedding night she wore the *siti*, or three-lined coronal, set with gems, and arms and neck were gay with flashing stones. All these were her dower, given by her father to be her personal property, and not even her husband can touch them without her consent, though he will add to them occasionally at festive moments. She will wear them all now and again, on great occasions, but meanwhile the silver anklets and the golden necklet and a few bangles are enough for daily use. The one thing from which she will never part, however, unless widowhood lays its icy hand upon her life, is that ring of iron covered with gold and worn on the left wrist, which is the sign of the indissoluble bond of her marriage—her wedding-ring in fact.

"With all the shyness of the religious novice comes the girl to her new house. Its very form, with its pillared courtyards, is that of a cloister. The constant dropping of the veil in the presence of a man, or before a senior, is the token of real retirement, the sacrament of an actual seclusion, within which all the voices of the world lose distinctness and individuality, becoming but faint echoes of that which alone can call the soul and compel the

eager feet. For India has no fear of too much worship. To her, all that exists is but a mighty curtain appearances, tremulous now and again with breaths from the unseen that it conceals. At any point, a pinprick may pierce the great illusion, and the seeker become aware of the Infinite Reality beyond. And who so fitted to be the window of the Eternal Presence as that husband, who is at once most adored and loved of all created beings?

"For there is a deep and general understanding of the fact that only in its own illumination, or its own feeling, can the soul find its highest individuation. To learn how she can offer most becomes thus the aim of the young wife's striving. All her dreams are of the saints—women mighty in renunciation: Sita, whose love found its richest expression in the life-long farewell that made her husband the ideal king; Sati who died rather than hear a word against Siva, even from her own father; and Uma, realising that her love was given in vain, yet pursuing the more eagerly the chosen path. "Be like Savitri," was her father's blessing, as he bade her the bridal farewell, and Savitri was that maiden who followed even the Death, till she won back her husband's life. Thus wifehood is thought great in proportion to its giving, not to its receiving.

"I have seen clearly and constantly that the master-note by which the Hindu woman's life can be understood is that of the religious life. This is so, even with the wife. Cloistered and veiled, she devotes herself to one name, one thought, yet is never known to betray the fact. The ideal that she pursues, is that of a vision which merges the finite in the infinite, making strong to mock at separation, or even at change.

And the point to be reached in practice is that where the whole world is made beautiful by the presence in it of the beloved, where the hungry are fed, and the

needy relieved, out of a joyful recognition that they wear a common humanity with his; and where, above all, the sense of unrest and dissatisfaction is gone for ever, in the overflowing fulness of a love that asks no return except the power of more abundant loving."

FOOTFALLS OF INDIAN HISTORY

Footfalls of Indian History is another important work of Sister Nivedita. The first edition of this book came out in 1932, that is, twenty-one years after her death. It was published by Messrs. Longmans Green and Co. Ltd., London and the title page of the book shows that Messrs. Gaya Prasad & Sons, Booksellers, Agra, were appointed Sole Agents for the sale of this book in India. Since then no other edition of the book has come out and the book remained outside the ken of the readers for a long time. It is only recently that a new illustrated edition of it has been published by Advaita Ashrama. There are altogether sixteen chapters in the book under the following titles:

The History of Man as determined by Place; The History of India and its study; The Cities of Buddhism; Rajgir; An Ancient Babylon; Behar; The Ancient Abbey of Ajanta; The Chinese Pilgrim; the Relation between Buddhism and Hinduism; Elephanta—The Synthesis of Hinduism; Some Problems of Indian Research; The Final Recension of the Mahabharata; The Rise of Vaishnavism under the Guptas; The Historical significance of the Northern Pilgrimage; The Old Brahmanical Learning; The City in Classical Europe: A visit to Pompeii; A Study of Banaras;

Thus, excepting one chapter, the whole of the book is devoted to the study of Indian history at its various stages. Tutored by her Master, Nivedita imbibed a strong historical sense and she explored the ancient history of India with the passion of a research worker. Indeed, she revived the glory of ancient India lost into the dim past by her steadfast research and endeavour. Nivedita had unbounded faith in the future of India and

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this is why she inspired many in the direction of historical research. Behind the impelling force of her mind, was the sincere service to the country which she adopted as her second motherland. In this connection we are reminded of an incident which Sir Jadunath Sarkar has recorded: "One day when I was praising an aged Orientalist for his valuable historical work, dshe replie in a pained voice, 'Oh, don't speak of him, he is a flatterer of English...Never lower your flag to foreigner. Try to be the greatest authority in the world in the particular branch of research that you have chosen for yourself. India must be recognised as the first here'."

Most of the articles in the book were first published in the journals in which Nivedita used to contribute frequently. Chapter Six was first serialised in the *Karmoyogin*, the English Weekly started by Sri Aurobindo after his acquittal in the Alipore Bomb Case.

The text of the book is preceded by a fine piece of poem in which the writer invokes the Mother history; she hears as if her footfalls on the bounds of the timeless time. The poem, aptly titled, *The Footfalls*, runs thus:

We hear them, O Mother!

Thy footfalls,

Soft, soft, through the ages

Touching earth here and there,

And the lotuses left on Thy footprints

Are cities historic,

Ancient scriptures and poems and temples,

Noble strivings, stern struggles for Right.

Where lead they, O Mother!

Thy footfalls?

O grant us to drink of their meaning!

Grant us the vision that blindeth

The thought that for man is too high.

Where lead they, O Mother!

Thy footfalls?

Approach Thou, O Mother, Deliverer!
Thy children, thy nurslings are we!
On our hearts be the place for Thy stepping,
Thine own, Bhumia Devi, are we.
Where lead they, O Mother!
Thy footfalls?

The book opens with the following premises:

"The character of a people is their history as written in their own subconscious mind, and to understand that character we have to turn on it the lime-light of their history. Then each anomaly is explained, and the whole becomes a clear and consistent result of cause traced to their very root. In the same way the geographical distribution of ideas falls under the same explanation as absolutely as that of plants or animals. A map of a country is only a script produced by all the ages of its making. In the beautiful maps of the past, in which rivers are seen with their true value as the high roads of nature, the veins and arteries of civilisations, this fact was still more apparent than today, when the outstanding lines of connection between cities are railways, the channels of the drainage of wealth being of more importance than those of its production. Yet even now it is the river-made cities that the railways have to connect. Even the twentieth century cannot escape the conditions imposed by the past."

In her study of history Nivedita holds the view that "only the history of Asia can explain the geography of Asia and the rest of the first chapter is devoted in explaining this view scientifically by citing instances of Rome, Greece, Carthage, Phoenicia, Crete in Europe and of different empires in Central Asia, Arabia and India

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and Egypt. Tracing the evolution of the consciousness of a unity that transcends the family, Nivedita concludes that "all these results have been produced on mankind, unsought, by its history and its environment."

A proper study of the history of India has long been a problem. In most cases the approach has either been wrong or prejudiced. Inviting our attention to this fact, Nivedita begins the second chapter of her book in the following manner:

"India as she is, is a problem which can only be read by the light of Indian history. Only by a gradual and loving study of how she came to be, can we grow to understand what the country actually is, what the intention of her evolution, and what her sleeping potentiality may be.....We are often told that Indian literature includes no histories.....but we must remember that India herself is the master-document in this kind. The country is her own record. She is the history that we must learn to read."

Here we have the correct glimpse of the mind of the writer and the fountain-spring of her sincerity. Carefully does she delve into the dim and distant past of India with a view to obtain a correct perspective of her ancient history. What the writer wants to point out is that it is not the want of material or the abundance of material that matters, it is the mind, the approach that matters in our study of the history of India. It is painfully true. Only a synthetical mind can properly study the history of India. Geographical synthesis is equally necessary. In fact, as Nivedita says, the whole of India is necessary to the explanation of the history of each one of its parts. "India is at once the occasion and the explanation of the web of Indian thought."

Now the point is how to read this history? And here is the answer:

"If India itself be the book of Indian history, it follows that travel is the true means of reading that history. The truth of this statement, especially while the published renderings of our history remain so inadequate and so distorted, ought never to be forgotten. Travel as a mode of study is of infinite importance."

And we have seen in her own life that Sister Nivedita herself travelled extensively almost all over India accompanied by her Master and even afterwards in the company of such eminent men as Sir Jadunath Sarcar, Sir J. C. Bose and Rabindranath. She learnt about India more by travel than by reading books. Yet the question remains: does travel fully help us in this respect? Certainly not. As Nivedita says:

"Yet it is not everything. It is quite possible to travel the world over and see nothing, or only what is not true. We see, after all, only what we are prepared to see. How to develop the mind of the taught so that it shall see, not what its teacher has led it to expect, but the fact that actually passes before the eyes, is the problem of all right scientific education. In history also, we want to be able to see, not the thing that would be pleasant, but the thing that is true."

Unless we develop a synthetic vision of the history of India, we shall never be able to get into the heart of India, however we might make academic endeavours. This is why Nivedita says:

"But one of the master-facts in Indian history is that India is and always has been a synthesis. No amount of analysis—racial, lingual, or territorial—will ever amount in the sum to the study of India...At any rate, apart from and above all the fragments which must be added together to make India, we have to

recognise India herself, all-containing, all-dominating, moulding and shaping the destinies and the very nature of the elements out of which she is composed."

Thus leaving out of our mind and imagination any partisan view, we must, have the whole view of Indian history without any bias. What the writer intends to emphasise is that we must take refuge in the Indian world we see around us and then think of our past history. That is the proper way to study the history of India. We must live in the true historic atmosphere and we need not be carried away by any sentiment that all that were in the past are good and best. Such a mind can never hope to proceed much beyond the surface. And here the writer raises a caution which deserves the careful consideration of every serious student of history:

"The search for stern truth is the best fruit of the best scientific training. But the truth is not necessarily melancholy, and Indian students will do most to help the growth of knowledge if they begin with the robust conviction that in the long tale of their Motherland there can be nothing to cause them anything but pride and reverence. What is truly interpreted cannot but redound to the vindication and encouragement of India and the Indian people."

Now we present to the readers Nivedita's description of the ancient city of Rajgir which she visited. The ruins of Rajgir reminded her about Babylon. Her description of Rajgir is as much vivid and poetic as it is historically realistic combined with her gift of architectural insight. It is one of the finest compositions we have from the pen of Nivedita.

RAJGIR

“Up, up, up. The long array of steps seems endless, as we climb the steep hillside to reach the dwelling that has been lent us for a few weeks’ habitation; and, after all, when we come upon it, it is nothing but a nest of robber-barons, this old manor-house of the Rajas of Annwa.it consists of two parts—a court on the inside guarded against intrusion and crowned with wide terrace-roofs; and without, a few rooms ranged about two sides of an open square. Its feudal and mediaeval character lends the building an interest which its undeniable beauty well sustains. But far beyond either of these considerations is the exciting fact that we are to keep house for twenty-one days in a spot where for a period of from twenty-five to thirty centuries there has been continuously a human habitation. For the great staircase by which we have climbed the rugged hillside is undoubtedly constructed over the foundations of the ancient walls of Rajgir, and the earliest predecessor of the Barons of Annwa must have chosen for his family stronghold to develop one of the butteresses of the guard-room of the selfsame walls, occurring on a small plateau. Below us lies the floor of the winding pass with the stream that forms a moat at the foot of our mountain-stairway. In front of a great curving staircase protects those temples and hot springs of Rajgir which still form the objective of a yearly Hindu pilgrimage. And out in the open, a stone’s throw away as it seems in this clear plain atmosphere, but really perhaps a mile by the road, is the

modern village of Rajgir, anciently Raja-Griha, the city or dwelling place of kings.

"How beautiful is the country that lies stretched before us! Outward from the mouth of our twisting pass, at Christmas time or thereabouts, it will be covered in the green of rice and other crops, with every here and there a field of white opium poppies in full bloom. But now, at the change of the season in October, we see here fields as patches of many-coloured earth—purple and brown and red—and we remember the words of Buddha, half laughing doubtless yet full of affectionate memory and tenderness, of one who said to a disciple in a much-patched garment that he reminded him of the ricefields about Rajgir.

"A quarter of a mile behind us the hills open out into a circle, and here lie the ruins of the ancient city of kings—wonderfully clear and distinct in every part of them. We almost might trace out the very lines of the bazars. With regard to streets and roads, it sounds dangerously near truism to say that they retain their positions with little change from age to age, yet I do not know that the fact has been much noted. Here in Rajgir at any rate, where hundreds of cows and buffaloes, sheep and goats, are driven daily by the herds to and from the ancient ruins, many of the main roadways remain much as they must have been in the dim past. Here, for instance, is the thoroughfare that ran through the city, with traces at a certain point near the centre of the palace walls, bastions, and gateways; and here beyond the palace are the outlines of the royal pleasure-grounds, with their wonderfully engineered ornamental waters intact to this day. All through this little mountain-arena and the pass that leads to it, indeed, there has been an extraordinary amount of hydraulic engineering. It would seem as if the fame of the hot springs must have been

the original cause of the royal settlement in this natural fortress, and the artificial development of its streams the main occupation of the kingly line thereafter. Even now below our own walled and moated manor lies and empty tank that two thousand years ago most likely held lotuses in a park. Even now the river that runs through the valley, though naturally one, is divided in parts into two and even three streams, forming a network that is enough to show the attention that must have been paid in ancient India to the problems of irrigation, in order to give birth to so marvellous a degree of hydraulic science.

"There can be few places in the world so old as Rajgir, about which so much is definitely known and so much safely to be inferred. It was in all probability about the year 590 B.C.—in a world in which Babylon and Phoenicia and Egypt and Sheba were of all facts most living and important—it was about the year 590 B.C. that there came along the road leading into the valley yonder, one whose very form was radiant with feeling and thought, that lifted him above the common world into that consciousness that makes history.

"It may have been early morning when He came. For the books say that the great company of goats was being led up to that moment for the royal sacrifice; fixed, it may have been, for about the hour of the noon. Or it may have been about the time of cowdust, on the eve of the festival, and the herdsmen may have intended to stable their goats for that night outside the palace. In any case, He came, some say carrying on his shoulder a lame kid, followed by the patter of thousands of little hoofs. He came, moreover, in a passion of pity. A veritable storm of compassion had broken loose within him on behalf of these, the helpless "little brothers" of humanity, who were caught like man himself in the net of pain

and pleasure, of life and death; bewildered like man by love and sorrow, but who unlike man for want of speech could neither express their perplexity nor form a conception of release. Surely they crowded round Him, and and rubbed themselves against Him again and again, the gentle, wondering, four-footed things!

"Passing through the gate and standing at the opening of the theatre-like valley, we find that the river which flows out of the city as one, is made up of two streams which between them encircle the royal city as a moat, even within its girdle of mountains and its enclosing walls. They join at this point. Leaving unexplored that which flows towards us from the left part of the garden of Ambapali, the Indian Mary Magdalene, and past the abodes of many of the characters who figure in the narrative of Buddha's life, we may turn to the branch which comes to us from the right.

"A world of discoveries await us here! The path leads us across to the water, but this is easily forded by stepping-stones which may still be detected as fragments of an ancient bathing *ghat*. Evidently bathing and the bathing-ghat were as prominent in the Indian civilisation twenty-five centuries ago as they are today. Then the road follows the streamside at a distance of some fifty yards more or less from the line of mountains on the right. About midway through the city the face of this mountain is pierced by a great cave, known today to the peasants of the countryside as the *Sonar Bhandar* or Golden Treasury. The interior of this cave is polished, not carved. There stands in it the earliest *stupa* I have ever seen. The outside is half concealed by shrubs and creepers. But even now the mortice-holes remain that show where the carved wooden ornaments were once attached. And even now as we stand at the entrance we see in the distance, in the middle of the city, the tower that Fa Hian

noted as still intact and visible in the year A.D. 404, crowning a small *stupa* or well to the east of the palace.

"This cave was then the cathedral of Old Rajgir. Here Buddha must have rested or meditated or taught; and there must have been a roadway connecting it directly with the palace. We proceeded to brush aside the wild growths and explore the line between the two. Outside the cave we found a level floor of ancient asphalt, a sort of Venetian Plaza de San Marco as it were. This was evidently the town square. We read a reference in one of the old Chinese *suttas* of a certain place in Rajgir where the peacocks were fed. 'The place where the peacocks were fed'; how our minds lingered over the words when we first read them! And now here we stand. For undoubtedly just as the pigeons are fed outside St. Paul's, so on this asphalt plaza, before the cathedral entrance in an Eastern city, it fitted the royal dignity and bounty that peacocks should be daily given grain.

"The asphalt runs down to the river and across it. For the water still flows under the ancient bridge, and we can walk on it though its level is somewhat sunken. Easily, then, we make our way to the royal mansion, clearly marked as this is at its four corners by the foundations of four bastion towers. But turning again to the bridge, we find an unbroken line of this same asphalt running along the bank by the way we have come, though sooth to say we might never have noticed it if we had not been tracing it out from the conspicuous mass.

"Was this, the river-front opposite to the palace, protected by the steep hills behind, and running from the town plaza to the bathing *ghat* beyond, and across this to the city gates—was this the High Street of the ancient town? Every now and again, as day after day we pace brooding up and down the distance, every now and again we come upon some hitherto unnoticed mass of masonry

or mason's tool-marks. Here are a couple of blocks lying on their sides, as if to form a seat in a river-wall. Here again traces of steps or fallen ornaments. At one place on the opposite bank, deeply sunk between masses of earth and vegetation, there runs down to the riverside a small ravine that would now pass as a gully if the pavement or ancient asphalt did not prove it—in days before Pompeii and Herculaneum were born—to have been a street.

"What were the houses like that looked down upon these footways? What was the life that was lived in them? How long had the place been a city? How long did it continue to be one? What were the surroundings in the height of its glory of this abode of kings, now and austere and desolate ruins? These and a thousand other questions crowd upon us, and it is strange to how many of them we can give an answer. The rushing rains of Indian summers have long washed away most the soil from the hanging gardens that once clothed the hillsides, and made the prospect from the palace to the gates and beyond them through the pass leading out into the plains a veritable vision of delight.

"But still the artificial terraces of red trap-rock are smooth and level amidst the out-cropping massess of natural crags, and still the wanderer may take his stand on some spot whence Bimbisara, the king was wont to look upon the glories of his inheritance, or, with difficulty at one or two points, may trace the way through the old pleasance by which doubtless royal hunting-parties may have started for the forest-glades. Today, it is true, there are no rich woodlands covering slopes and mountain-tops, as in the royal ages. Wild undergrowth, dense shrubs, and here and there a twisted palm growing in a cranny are all that can stand for the lofty timbers, dense aisles of the days when the place was a paradise, a king's garden surrounding a king's palace. And still at the back of the

ruined city, guarding it from the passes on the south and east, we find the double walls of enormous thickness.

"The square mortice-holes in the face of the rock out of which the great *Sonar Bhandar* is hollowed, give us a clue that enables us to rebuild, mentally, the ancient city. For these mortice-holes held the attachments of the wooden ornaments that formed the front of the cave..... From these we can gather an idea of what the palace of Bimbisara and the homes of his subjects must have been like. The first storey, then, was massive, sloping inwards and upwards, loopholed and buttressed at its four corners by four circular towers. The first storey only was built of stone, and its parapet was battlemented. On the strong terrace provided by the roof of this fortification were constructed the family living rooms, which were of wood much carved. Here, built of hard grey stone now black with age we have what seems to be the inside corner, and part of the courtyard. Outside, the walls would be almost blind; inside, they are honeycombed with many-pillared halls and verandhas, and one room with raised floor that represents an old Indian form of bedchamber and bed in one. The building is of massiveness that rivals nature, and there are a few pillars still left whose simplicity of form enables any observer that knows Sanchi to feel fairly confident in assigning the building as a whole to the reign of Asoka or earlier.

"Of such a form, though perhaps smaller and less elaborate, may we suppose the palace of Rajgir to have been, and in the streets about it the more plebian dwellings of the townfolk must, though small and comparatively huddled, have been like unto it. True, their lower storeys would be built, in all probability, even as the huts of the Rajgir pilgrims are to this day, of mud and pebbles, instead of lordly stone. From hillocks formed

of such deposits, anyone may pick out by the streamside, at various different levels, bits of old household pottery. But the facings and tops of the shops and houses were doubtless of carved wood, and the front of the cathedral was a faithful enough reflex of the life of the town. Through such streets, while the king stood watching him from the roof of the palace, paced the Sakya Prince, "a lad in his first youth", ere yet he was Buddha, and no honour that Bimbisara could offer would tempt him from that bridal of Poverty in which alone his mind delighted. "This life of the household is pain, free is only he who lives in the open air"; thinking thus he embraced the life of the wandering monk.

* * * *

"Nor need we think that the city thus built was only a palace and its appurtenances. The fact that it actually became the new centre of population, forming the direct ancestor of the present village, shows itself two hundred years later, when the great Asoka, desiring to build fitting memorials to Him whom the emperor delighted to honour, chose its north-western corner, on the left-hand of the main gateway, whereat to place a *stupa* and Asokan pillar with an inscription. As the edicts carved by Asoka on rocks and pillars have the character of proclamation, it follows that the rocks and pillars themselves partake somewhat of the nature of the modern journal, inasmuch as they were the means adopted to publish the royal will, and hence a position could never be selected for them at a distance from inhabited cities.

"We may take it, then, that Old Rajgir was really deserted at about the time of Bimbisara's successor, and, if it was afterwards used as a royal residence, was so used at intervals. Such then was the city, already ancient, through which Buddha himself has passed time and again and where He was held by all as an honourable guest.

Across these fields and up and down these streets, now ruined, or within the massive cathedral-cave of *Sonar Bhandar*, there echo to this hour the immortal reverberations of Buddha's voice."

CRADLE TALES OF HINDUISM

IN the preface of this interesting book, Sister Nivedita writes:

"In the following stories, it may be worth while to point out, we have a collection of genuine Indian nursery-tales.....To take them one by one, the Cycle of Snake Tales is found in the first volume of the Mahabharata. The story of Siva is inserted as a necessary foreword to those of Sati and Uma. The tale of Sati is gathered from the Bhagavat Purana, and that of the Princess Uma from the Ramayana, and from Kalidas' poem of *Kumar Sambhava*, "The Birth of the War-Lord." Savitri, the Indian Alcestis, comes from that mine of jewels, the Mahabharata, as does also the incomparable story of Nala and Damayanti. In the Krishna Cycle, the first seven numbers are from the Puranas, and the last three from the Mahabharata. The tales classed as those of the Devotees, are, of course, from various sources, those of Dhruva and Prahlad being popular versions of stories found in the Vishnu Purana, while Gopala and his Brother the Cowherd is, I imagine, like the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya, merely a village tale. Shibi, Rana, Bharata, and the two last stories in the collection, are from the Mahabharata. Of the four tales classed together under the group-name "Cycle of the Ramayana", it seems unnecessary to point out that they are intended to form a brief epitome of that great poem, which has for hundreds of years been the most important

influence in shaping the characters and personalities of Hindu women. The Mahabharata may be regarded as the Indian national saga, but the Ramayana is rather the epic of Indian womanhood. Sita, to the Indian consciousness, is its central figure.

"These two great works form together the outstanding educational agencies of Indian life. All over the country, in every province, audiences of Hindus and Mohammedans gather round the Brahmin story-teller at nightfall, and listen to his rendering of the ancient tales.

"My special thanks are due to the help afforded me in the preparation of this volume to the Hindu lady, Jogin-Mother—a kind neighbour, whose deep and intimate knowledge of the sacred literature is only equalled by her unfailing readiness to help a younger student—and to the Swami Saradananda of the Ramakrishna Math, Belur. The frontispiece, of "The Indian Story-teller at Nightfall," and the Thunderbolt of Durga on the cover, are the work of the distinguished Indian artist, Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore."

The first edition of the book came out in 1907 and since then it went into several editions which speak for the wide popularity the book gained in India and outside. Originally it was published by Longmans, Green & Co. For a time a school text-book edition of the book was in circulation when it was included in the syllabus of the Indian schools. The Advaita Ashrama has now published a new Indian edition of the *Tales*. The dedication of the book runs thus:

To

All Those Souls who have
grown to greatness by their childhood's
love of the Mahabharata.

The contents of the book are divided into several 'Cycles' such as:

The Cycle of Snake Tales containing three stories; The story of Siva, the Great God; The Cycle of Indian Womanhood containing four stories; The cycle of the Ramayana containing four stories; The cycle of Krishna containing ten stories; Tales of the Devotees containing five stories; A Cycle of Great Kings containing four stories and A Cycle from the Mahabharata containing two stories.

For sheer language and style, *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* stands as a unique contribution of Nivedita to her own language. The book at once shows how deeply she was versed in the epics and the Purans of India. Rabindranath once remarked that had Sister Nivedita left nothing but the *Cradle Tales*, she would have gained an immortality in our hearts. We quote from this book, the two most fascinating pieces which go by the names "The Lament of Gandhari", and "The Ordeal of Sita".

THE LAMENT OF GANDHARI

The sun itself was pale that rose over the battlefield of Kurukshetra, when the combat was ended. The eighteenth day had seen the slaying of Duryodhana, and the last night of all had witnessed a massacre in the sleeping camp of the Pandavas, wherein children, grandchildren, friends, and confederates of the victors had all alike been put to the sword. To add to the horror of this carnage, it was known that many of the destined victims, wakened from sleep by cries and sounds of struggle coming out of the darkness, and believing that an army had taken them by surprise, had struggled to their feet and slain each other. Morning dawned on

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scenes of desolation and despair. True, the Pandava heroes and Krishna stood uninjured and victorious, but about them lay the death of all their hopes. Theirs was henceforth the empire, but without any heir to whom it could be left. The throne was secured to them, but their homes were empty. Around them on every hand lay the flower of Indian knighthood, silent for ever. Those who had marched to battle with colours flying, those whose chariots had been foremost, their steeds most spirited, and their trumpets loudest, those whose seats had been veritably on the back of the elephant, lay now on the cold earth, at the mercy of kites and jackals, of vultures and wolves. Even amongst the mighty hosts of Duryodhana, their foe, three officers alone were left alive.

In the distance was seen the woe-stricken procession of the royal women of the Kurus, coming to mourn their dead. And the Pandavas trembled as they gazed at them, for those whose reserve had been hitherto so impenetrable that the gods themselves might scarcely look on them, walked now, absorbed in their great grief, in utter indifference of the public eye. The hundred sons of Dhritarashtra all lay dead upon that field.

Somewhat withdrawn from the rest, and made venerable, not only by their rank, but also by their blindness, Gandhari the Queen and Dhritarashtra the King were seated in their car of state. They were the heads of the defeated house, and heads even, by blood kindred, of the family of victors. For them, by reason of the respect due to them, the meeting with the Pandavas must necessarily seem more like the submission of Yudhisthira than his triumph. To them, therefore, came the young King—Dharma-Raja, King of Righteousness, as his people called him henceforth—with his four brothers, and Draupadi, and Krishna, and, touching their feet, stood before them in deep silence.

Right queenly was the aged Gandhari in her sorrow. Dhritarashtra her husband had been born blind; but she, out of wifely devotion, of her own accord had darkened her eyes with a bandage, and worn it faithfully all the years of their union. And by this had come to her deep spiritual insight. Her voice was as the voice of fate. That which she had said would happen, could not fail to come to pass. Day after day of the battle, when Duryodhana had come to her in the morning, asking for her blessing that he might return triumphant from that day's fighting, she had said only, "Victory, my son, will follow the Right!" From the beginning she had known that Kurukshetra would see the end of all her house. Even now, such was the sternness of her self-control, her heart was weeping rather for her husband, in his sorrow and desolation, than for her own loss of 'a century of sons.' And this was the more true, since she knew well that had it not been for Dhritarashtra's own weakness and desire, the disaster of this day need never have been wavered. Never for one moment had she cast longing glances towards empire, preferring it in her secret heart to righteousness. But this very fact, that her husband was being crushed under the doom he had himself brought down upon himself, was calling out her deepest tenderness in this sad hour. Proud and stern to the whole world beside, to him Gandhari was all a wife, gentle and loving and timid in sight of his pain. She knew well that from her in these terrible moments might go out the force that destroys, and lest she should bring harm thereby upon Yudhisthira as he approached to make salutation, she restrained her powers forcibly, and bent her eyes downward, within their enfolding hands, upon his foot; and immediately, it is said, at that point where she was looking, a burn appeared, so terrible was her gaze.

But when she had spoken kindly with Draupadi and the Queen-mother of the Pandavas, Gandhari turned away from all others and addressed herself to Krishna. With Him alone there was no need of self-control. With Him she might even let the battlefield, with all its fearful details, rise point by point before the eyes of her mind. Hand in hand, as it were, with the Lord, she might gaze on all, think of all, and tell out her whole heart.

"Behold, O Lotus-Eyed," she cried, "these daughters of my house! Widowed of their lords, with locks unbound, hear Thou their cries of woe! Brooding over their dead bodies, they call to mind the faces of the great Bharata chiefs! Behold them seeking out their husbands, their sires, their sons and brothers! The whole field is covered with these childless mothers, and widowed wives, of heroes. Here lie the bodies of great warriors, who in their lifetime were like to blazing fires. Here are scattered their costly gems and golden armour, their ornaments and garlands. The weapons hurled by heroic hands, spiked clubs and swords, and darts of many forms, lie in confusion here, never again to speed forth on dread errands of slaughter. And beasts of prey roam hither and thither at their will, amongst the dead. How terrible, O Krishna, is this battlefield! Beholding these things, O powerful One, I am on fire with grief!

"How empty is now become the Universe! Surely, in this dread contest of Kurus and Pandavas, the elements themselves have been destroyed! Desolate, like ashes of dead fires, lie now those heroes, who took the part of Duryodhana in this fray. On the bare earth sleep they who knew all softness. Hymned by the cries of the jackals are they whose glory was chanted by the bards. Embracing their weapons, they lie low amidst the dust of battle. And the wailing of women mingles with the roar of hungry beasts, singing them to their rest. What was

that destiny, O Krishna, that has pursued us?" Weeping and lamenting in this fashion, the Kuru queen suddenly became aware that the dead body of her son Duryodhana lay before her. This sight was too much for the down-smitten woman, and all her grief burst forth afresh. She remembered her own terrible blessing, "Victory, O my son, will follow the Right!" pronounced every morning over the head of the kneeling prince. She saw now realised the same vision that had been present with her daily, since the battle began. All these days she had been treading a path of anguish under the shadow of the coming woe. She had become as it were the companion of judgment and sorrow, and there was no room for appeal. A great queen was Gandhari, wife of Dhritarashtra, sovereign of the Kuru clans, yet she was woman and mother also and her mourning that was half wail, half prayer, rose suddenly to a new note.

"Behold, O Krishna " she said. "Behold my son, wont in battle to be irresistible, sleeping here on the bed of heroes! Terrible are the changes wrought by Time! This terror of his foes, who of old walked foremost amongst the crowned persons, lies now before us in the dust. He for whose pleasure the fairest of women would die with one another, has none now to bear him company save hungry jackals. He who was proudly encircled by kings, lies slain now, and encircled by the vultures.

"Fanned now is he by noisome birds of prey, with the flapping of their wings. Prince as he was and soldier, my son lies slain by Bhima, even as the elephant may be slain by the lion. Behold Thou him, O Krishna, lying on the bare ground yonder, stained with his own gore, slain in battle by the club of Bhima! Not long since, beheld I the earth, full of elephants and cattle and horses,

ruled by Duryodhana without a rival. Today do I behold her destitute of creatures, and ruled by another.

"Ah, why breaketh not my heart into a hundred fragments, at the sight of these my beloved slain in battle? What sin have I and these other weeping daughters of men, committed, that Time should have brought upon us this disaster?"

Passing then from the contemplation of Duryodhana and the sons of her own household, the mourning chant of the Queen proceeded. Dwelling upon each hero in turn, Gandhari passed the whole history of the battle in review. Again and again, her mind took note of the impossibility of having stayed the great catastrophe at any point. Again and again she dwelt on the inevitableness of fate. Every now and then would her sobs break out afresh, "How early, O Blessed One, how early, have all these my sons been utterly consumed!"

The voice of Gandhari failed and broke, and she ceased for a moment from the wildness of her sorrow. In that moment, all that had happened passed swiftly before her mind. Like one who had risen a step on a mountain side, she saw suddenly also the Pandava bereavement. The battle appeared before her as a play, in which two armies had destroyed each other. Who had been the mover of all these puppets? Who, that could have prevented, had allowed such evil to befall? With one swift glance, Gandhari saw the truth, and, in the thunder-like tones of the prophet, gazing at a vision of far-off doom, with the voice of the judge instead of that of the mourner, she turned slowly round and addressed herself once more to the Lord of All.

"Two armies, O Krishna, have been here consumed. Whilst they thus put an end to each other, why were Thine eyes closed? Thou who couldst have done either well or ill, as pleased Thee, why hast Thou allowed this

evil to come upon all? Mine is it then, Thou Wielder of discus and mace, in virtue of the truth and purity of womanhood, to pronounce Thy doom! Thou, O Govinda, because Thou wast indifferent to the Kurus and Pandavas, whilst they killed each other, shalt Thyself become the slayer of Thine own kinsmen. In the thirty-sixth year from now, O slayer of Kansa, having brought about the destruction of Thy sons and kindred, Thou shalt Thyself perish by woeful means, alone in the wilderness. And the women of Thy race, deprived of sons, kindred and friends, shall weep and wail in their desolation, as do now these of the race of Bharata!"

And lo, as Gandhari ended, the Lord looked upon her and smiled! "Blessed be thou, O Gandhari," said He, "in thus aiding Me in the ending of my task. Verily are My people, the Vrishnis, incapable of defeat, therefore must they needs die by the hands of one another. Behold, O mother, I accept thy curse." And all who listened to these words were filled with wonder and fear.

The Queen listened in silence to the words of Krishna. Desolation was spread around and within. Nothing appeared before her save the life of austerity, to be spent in the forest. With vision purified by great events, she looked out upon the world, and found it all unreal. There was nothing further to be said, and she remained silent.

THE ORDEAL OF SITA

As Mary the Madona to the women of Christendom, so is Sita, Queen of Ayodhya, to them of Hinduism. Hers is indeed a realm beyond the aspiration of merely earthly sovereigns. For she is the ideal womanhood itself,

and she wields undisputed sway, in million of hearts, over the kingdoms of love and sorrow, and stainless womanly honour and pride. Though beautiful and a queen, she never chose ease. To her the simple lives of saints and scholars were more joyous than all the luxuries of the courts. She knew every mood of the forests, joining in their praise in the early morning, when birds wake and blossoms open and the dew is fresh; and bowing her soul with their in the evening adoration. She shared a throne, yet never forgot that for their people's good, and not for their own pleasure, do soveriegn reign. She knew the highest human happiness, and was not blinded by happiness. She knew the deepest and bitterest sorrow, and lived serence amidst the sorrow. Such was Sita, Queen of Ayodhya, crowned of love, veiled in sorrow, and peerless amongst women.

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Rama's whole heart was filled with the longing to see Sita, and renew once more the life-sweetness which had been broken that morning when he left her to catch the golden deer. Yet he was no more mortal, full of blind impulse, a prey to the chance-born desires of the passing moment. He foresaw that if their reunion was to be secure, it must take place in public, and must be accompanied by some proof of his wife's honour and devotion which could never be shaken in the popular mind. There could be no happiness for Sita if her subjects did not love her and trust her implicitly. There could be none for him if her name were not lifted high above the stain of suspicion or reppraoch.

But the first duty that awaited him had nothing to do with these questions. He was at this moment at the head of a conquering army. His first responsibility lay in protecting the city, with its women, its children, and its treasures, from his own forces. He hastened, therefore, to

crown and proclaim Vibhishana king of Lanka. This done, he called Hanuman secretly, and, bidding him obtain the permission of the new King to enter the city, sent him to Sita to acquaint her privately with his victory.

Publicly he proffered a formal request to Vibhishana that he would personally escort the Queen of Kosola to his presence. She was to come, moreover, wearing the robes and jewels proper to occasions of state. The loving heart of the woman would have prompted her to fly to the shelter of her husband just as she was, in the mourning garments of her captivity. But Vibhishana reminded her gently of the sacredness of a husband's wish, and she submitted immediately to the tiring which this imposed. Hard, verily, are the roads that princes walk! Treading at each step on her own heart, must Sita make her way to her husband's side. At last the Queen was ready and entered the closed palanquin, with its hangings of scarlet and gold, in which she would be borne into the presence of Rama, Vibhishana himself riding before her to announce her coming. At the city gates, however, came the request that she should alight and proceed through the open camp on foot. Scarcely understanding, and so absorbed in the thought of seeing the King that she had little care for any minor detail, Sita rose from her seat in the covered litter and stepped out on the broad road. Round her, to right and left, were the soldiery. In front was seated Rama, in full audience, with grave and solemn air. All eyes were on Sita, who had never, since her childhood to this hour, been seen in public. Instinctively the knightly Vibhishana realised the embarrassment this must cause to the shrinking and sensitive Queen, and he was in the act of ordering the dispersal of the crowds, so as to leave the meeting of the royal pair unwitnessed, when Rama put up his hand and stopped him. "Let all stay!" he commanded. "This is one of those occasions when the

whole universe becomes the veil of woman, and she may be seen by all without sin!"

Nearer and nearer came Sita meanwhile, with slow and regal step. Her eyes were drinking in every line, every movement of her husband's face. He rose to receive her; but all men saw that he looked not towards her, but stood with heads bowed and downward-gazing eyes. How beautiful was the Queen! How stately and full of grace she looked! And yet, decked as she in royal ornaments, there was that about her which spoke more plainly still, assuring all who looked on her that here was a woman of true and noble heart, a humble and loving wife, fit to be, as she was, the crown and support of all the happy homes throughout her land. Every man in the hosts that day held his breath in awe and reverence, at the revelation seen in her of what great womanhood should be.

At a sign from her husband, and a few paces away, the Queen stood still, and Rama looked up and addressed her in thick, constrained tones. "Ravana has been duly defeated and slain," he said. "Thus has the honour of Ayodhya been vindicated to the utmost. It is for the Queen, whom he separated from her husband, to say in what guardianship, and with what establishment, she will now choose to live. Thy wishes, O gentle one!" he added, addressing her for a moment directly and swept away by his own tenderness, "shall be carried out in full. But it is not seemly or possible to restore to her old place one whose fair fame has been sullied by residence in the palace of Ravana."

At these words the Queen stood, in her sudden astonishment and pain, like one who had been stabbed. Then she raised her proud head to its proudest height, and, though her lips quivered and the tears fell, without her will, her wonderful voice rang out untremulous. "My character," she said, "must indeed be misconceived. Even

Rama, it seems, can mistake my greatness, and truly then I am undone! Yet if my lord had but told me, while yet I was imprisoned in Lanka, that it was for the honour of Ayodhya he would recover me, I would indeed have spared him all his labours. How easy had it been to me to die there, only I supposed that other motives moved him! Go, Lakshmana and make for me here a funeral pyre! Methinks that is the only remedy for the disaster that has come upon me."

This, then, was Sita's desire for guardians and establishment! Lakshmana looked towards his brother in an anger and surprise, but, receiving only a quite gesture, hastened to have the funeral pyre prepared. The face of Rama was like that of Death himself in the hour of the final destruction of all things, and none present dared to speak to him. As for Sita, her tears were now raining down; but still she stood there, waiting patiently.

When the wood had been piled and the fire set blazing, Sita walked three times round her husband, standing in his place, with head bowed, and it was evident to all that her heart was full of sweetness. Then, coming forward to the fire, and standing before it with her hands folded as for prayer, she said, "Do thou, O Fire, the witness of the worlds! protect me, whose heart has been ever true! Take me to yourselves, O ye pure flames! for unto the Lord of Purity the pure fleeth."

Saying this, and walking three times round the pyre, the Queen, having bidden farewell to the world with undaunted heart, entered into it. Like gold being set upon a golden altar was the stepping of Sita into that flaming fire. And lamentations arose on all sides from amongst the lookers-on. But lo, as her foot touched the pyre, voices of angelic sweetness were heard from heaven chanting the glory of Rama, and the mystery of the ineffable union of the Divine Being with His own divine grace.

And there advanced from the heart of the fire to meet Sita, Agni, the God of Fire, Himself. Supporting her with his right arm, and stepping out from amongst the flames, the divinity bore her forward to Rama, whose face had suddenly become radiant with joy, and gave her to him, joining them together.

"She is thine own, O Rama! he said; "she is thine own—ever faithful and true to thee, in thought, word, and deed. Lo, at my command is it that thou takest her back into thee. For I have spoken, and she is thine own!"

And Rama said, receiving her, "Verily, my beloved, no doubt was in my mind concerning thee. Yet was thy vindication needful, in the presence of all our people. Truly art thou mine. Think not thou canst be divided from me. Thou art mine, and I could not renounce thee, even as the sun cannot be separated from his own rays."

And as they stood thus, wedded once more—as in their youth by man, so now by the God of Fire Himself—it seemed to all present as if the gates of heaven were suddenly swung backward above them, and they saw Dasaratha, seated in his car, blessing Sita as well as Rama, and hailing them King and Queen of Ayodhya.

It was true that the fourteen years of their exile were ended, and as Rama understood from this vision that the soul of his father would not be in peace till his coronation was finally accomplished, he did everything that was possible to hasten their departure. A day or two passed, distributing wealth and rewards amongst the soldiers, and then mounting with Sita into the royal car, drawn by white swans, they coursed swiftly through the sky, and arrived at Ayodhya.

CIVIC AND NATIONAL IDEALS

As we have already seen, Sister Nivedita fully identified herself with the national aspirations of India and she took a prominent part both in our national movement during the early period of this century as well as in the renaissance of Indian art. In this book, a collection thirteen articles, Nivedita has discussed on the principles of nationality, civic elements in Indian life and about Indian art and sculpture. The third edition of the book came out in 1929. The contents of the book are: The Civic Ideal; Civic Elements in Indian Life; The Modern epoch and the National Idea; Unity of Life and type in India; The Indian National Congress; The Principle of Nationality; The function of Art in shaping Nationality; The Message of Art; Indian Sculpture; The Indian Painting; Shah Jahan Dreaming of the Taj; The passing of Shah Jahan; Sati.

Of these the last three represent Nivedita's criticism of two famous paintings by Abanindranath and another by his disciple, Nandalal Bose. They appeared in the *Modern Review* as a regular feature introduced and continued by Nivedita till her death. The rest of the articles were published in other papers on different occasions. It is an *Udbodhan* publication.

To understand the genius of Nivedita as an art critic, one must read all her criticisms on Indian art and sculpture. Although she was a writer of extraordinary range, yet she shines no where so better as in the field of criticism of art. This reminds us of her famous utterance: "The rebirth of the National Art of India is my dearest dream". She had a remarkable taste in the spiritual mysteries of Indian art and sculpture. Indeed, India is deeply indebted to her in this respect as she is to Havell.

CIVIC ELEMENTS IN INDIAN LIFE

The essential condition for the development of a strong civic spirit lies in the maintenance of the communal life and consciousness, and this condition is fulfilled nowhere else in the world as it is in oriental countries. This is to a certain extent the result of climate. Life, in the clear air and under the cloudless skies of India, is necessarily passed much in the open air. That the street is a kind of club, the very architecture, with its verandahs and stone-couches, bears the mute witness. The family-homes stand ranged behind the great open-air *salon*, like a row of convent-cells, for the stricter members of the choir. Sometimes there are added of the larger social groping visible to the eye. Bhubaneswar has its great tree in the midst of the parting of three roads, and at any hour one may see there knots of talkers of one sort or another, seated at ease, beneath it. Conjeeveram is like a city out of the old Greek or Assyrian world, so wide is the roadway that leads to the temple entrance, and so splendid the arch that spans it just before, eloquent, both, of communal worship and rejoicing. Nor are women in India altogether without their civic centres and gathering places, though these are necessarily concerned chiefly with the bathing-ghat, the temple, and the well.

Such meetings, however, of the inhabitants of a single street, or the members of either sex, amongst themselves, are not in strictness reunions of the highest civic order. They serve indeed to keep before the mind of each member of the community that social units which

transcends the family. But that unit is still simplified by adhesion to a single religious doctrine or a single body of custom. It is thus communal or parochial, rather than civic. It is after all, intellectually speaking, but as an assembly within the village. Now a city is made up of men and families from a thousand villages, and they are by no means of one faith alone, or even of one nationality. How complex is the typical city, we may be better able to judge, if we recall for a moment some of its more primitive examples. They stand always at the crossings of the great highways. To see this, we have only to look at Banaras, at Allahabad, at Babylon. To this day, all the railroads in India centre at Delhi.

The ideal city, then, is the meeting-place of sepherd and peasant, of merchant and artificer, of priest and pilgrim, of court and camp. It is the centre towards which converge streams that rise in all the quarters of the globe. It is a market-place and an exchange, a focus of wealth and industry, a hall of international council, and the quadrangle of a world university. Babylon forms a supreme example of the civic complexity. But Taxila must once have curiously resembled her, and ancient Thaneswar, and glorious Pataliputra.

The fractional unit, then, is not the civic unity. Yet it is, as we know it in India, a marvellously enduring fragment of an old-time unity, which carries with it, if we have eyes to read, a code of civic honour and a habit of civic fraternity. The village is a larger family, and a smaller city, and nothing can be more significant than the forms which its communal activity takes in India. The portion of the field that belonged to the Brahman was tilled for him. The widow's digging was done by her neighbours. The schoolmaster and his wife were maintained by gifts. It is learning, we note, and the spiritual power, for whose maintenance the community

concentrates its energy. To this day, there is no village in India, however poor, that will ask a stranger to visit it, in the capacity of teacher or thinker, without paying every expense of conveyance to and fro, in addition to the outlay incidental to the presence of a visitor. We have here the evidence of a vast civic culture deeply rooted in historic habits.

The same truth is impressed upon us in another way, by the ease with which Indian towns exert themselves to show civic hospitality. Here we have substantial earnest of the readiness to enter into larger organisation. There is no Hindu township that would present an address of welcome to a distinguished guest without the inclusion of Mohammedan names. Similarly, the Mohammedan district will make no representative deputation unless the Hindu residents of good standing are also to be found upon it. India is supposed to be sectarian, but no one ever heard of the members of one sect trying to exclude those of another from collective action! In such mutual courtesy and recognition, we have the largest possible basis for civic self-realisation of the highest order. It is by the study and understanding of our own cities, and their institutions, it must be remembered, that we shall be able to develop and build up our civic sense.

It has been said that the whole demand of citizenship lies in the claim that all the work of the city should be done by the people of the city. This is, as I cannot help thinking, but a defective summary of the duties of citizens. Surely they ought to rejoice together! Unless they meet now and then indeed with conscious thought of the one bond that securely unites them, amidst all their apparent diversities, the very spirit of citizenship will be likely to depart altogether, and leave them sundered. And this thought of kinship must be expressed

in festivity. It has ever been in the history of man, that the realising of social unity found expression in joy.

This is the feeling that speaks in every triumphal arch that ends a village-road, and crowns a bathing-ghat, on the banks of the Ganges. This is the feeling that our fathers knew, they instituted the practice of procession. Over and over again, in the Rig-Veda, the earth is referred to as "the sacrifice" round which the path of light makes a priestly circle, in the course of the year. It is one of the most beautiful and vigorous of similes. That of August Comte which may be freely translated "The Earth itself is but a large image, and space about it the infinite altar," sounds almost like an echo of the Vedic metaphor. But it reminds us of the beautiful procession of the images which are so characteristic a feature of life in Indian towns. As the light encircles the earth, so verily do these ceremonial pilgrimages girdle our boroughs and villages, nay, it is not only the worshipper of Sarasvati or the commemorator of Mohurram, who makes the circumambulation of the communal home. The whole Indian idea of enjoyment is communal, and even at a marriage, processions form the typical delight.

Let us not forget that at the heart of the circle lies the sacred object. Already there are rising amongst us, hereafter to be multiplied in number and deepened in significance, those other processions, symbolic of the idea of city and nationality. Already it is no uncommon thing to see the streets and lands of a Hindu town filled with its singing boys who, carrying banners and instruments, are chanting prayers to no god or goddess, but intoning the sacred address to the Motherland. Let us all remember as we watch them, that the city about which they march is the symbol of the nationality, that in her is the throne of the Mother Herself. The future will see more and more of these hymns and poems of place. To Indian hearts,

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high caste and lowly-born, woman and man, there will be no symbol so holy as, firstly, their mother-land, and secondly, their city. The civic life will offer a conception as clear as that of family and home. The duties of citizenship will seem not less precious than those of *jati* and *samaj*. And the worship of place and sense of civic honour, dignity and happiness will bear their flowers in each individual soul.

THE PRINCIPLE OF NATIONALITY

The principle nationality depends upon the fact that the supreme organic circumstances in moulding the destiny of man, is place. Those who having a common region of birth, connect the work, the institution, the ideals, and the purposes of their lives with that region and with their fellows, and those who, doing this, undergo a common economic experience, form a nation, with the duties, the responsibilities, and the faculties of a nation.

It has been said that man's only right is to his duty. But this implies that his right is also to do his whole duty. And what is true of the individual is true of communities. The people of a country has an inalienable right to do the whole work of their country.

Regarded from this point of view, then, each man becomes, not an entity by himself, not a fragment of a family or class or sect but a free member of a great nation. In this way he has to learn to think and feel and act.

In the realm of thought, this means, that each man must recognise his birthland as the supreme fact in his life, and must consciously bow himself to her influence,

glorying in it, and striving to rediscover and realise it in its essentials. In the realm of feeling, he must relate himself to the birthland and to all those who, with him, are born of her. The land and the people—India and the Indian nation. The heart of the nation-child, of the nation's man, must be great sounding board for the love and history and ideals of every province. Like the dome of the mosque, it must echo back in music all that is uttered beneath it, and every joy, and every sorrow, every mourning and every hope, of the Indian heart, must find place there. Like a vast picture-gallery, the heart of India's child, must be hung with the beauties of the land, mountain and coast, river and plain, morning and evening. And finally in conduct the man who carries himself as a member of a nation cannot afford to be as one who dreams. If all the work of the country is to be done by the people of the country, it follows that none can go for a moment unemployed. The light that lights the head of apostles, is about the man who understands. Energy, responsibility and an insatiable longing for self-sacrifice are his. All these, thought, feeling, work, devoted to a single end, make CHARACTER. Accepting the great purposes of a nationality, and struggling to serve it with whole hearted devotion, the man and the community become transformed. Their purpose is renewed, is clearly conceived, is still more earnestly served. Experience grows to wisdom. Character is stored up. And by the strength of character man can remove mountains,—“It is character that can cleave through adamant difficulty.”

In all lands, holiness and strength are the treasures which the race places in the hands of woman to preserve rather than in those of man. A few men here and there become great teachers, but most have to spend their days in toil for the winning of bread. It is in the home that these renew their inspiration and their faith and insight

and the greatness of the home lies in *tapasya* of the women. The Indian wives and mothers, do not need to be reminded of how much Rama, Sri Krishna, and Sankaracharya owed to their mothers. The quiet silent lives of women, living in their homes like *tapasvinis*, proud only to be faithful, ambitions only to be perfect, have done more to preserve the *Dharma* and cause it to flourish, than any battles that have been fought outside.

Today our country and her *Dharma* are in a sore plight and in a special manner he calls on her daughters at this moment to come forward, as those in the ages before, to aid her with a great *Sraddha*. How shall this be done? We are all asking. In the first place, let Hindu mothers renew in their sons the thirst for *Brahmacharya*. Without this our nation is shorn of her ancient strength. No country in the world has an ideal of the student's life so high as this and if it be allowed to die out of India where shall the world look to restore it? In *Brahmacharya* is this secret of all strength, all greatness. Let every mother determine that her sons shall be great! And secondly, can we not cultivate in our children and ourselves a vast *compassion*. This compassion will make us eager to know the sorrows of all men, the griefs of our land, and this growing knowledge will produce strong workers, working for work's sake, ready to die, if only they may serve their country and fellow-men. Is India not indeed our *Mother*? Do we not long to see her once more *Mahabharata*?

Art offers us the opportunity of a great common speech, and its rebirth is essential to the upbuilding of the motherland—its re-awakening rather. For India has known many great art-epoch which cannot yet have died. The age that sculptured Elephanta was deeply impressed with the synthesis of Hinduism. The power that painted Ajanta was as free and living in its enjoyment and

delineation of nature as any modern school of realists. The builders and carvers of Sanchi, of Amraoti and Gandhara enjoyed a continuous evolution of art, marked by great periodic waves of enthusiasm, through several successive centuries. Even a Mahomedan Empire, apart from its own architectural undertakings, only changed the form, it never attempted to suppress the process of creative art in India, as those who have seen the illuminated manuscripts in the Library at Patna can bear witness. An age of nationality, then, must resume into its own hands the power of each and all of these epochs. The key to new conquests lies always in taking up rightly our connection with the past. The man who has no inheritance has no future. The modern student needs to know and understand this.

An Indian painting, if it is to be really Indian and really great, must appeal to the Indian heart in an Indian way, must convey some feeling or idea that is either familiar or immediately comprehensible; and must further, to be of the very highest mark, arouse in the spectator a certain sense of revelation for which he is the nobler. But to do this, it is clear that it must be made up of elements which in themselves are already approved of by the communal taste. Thus an Indian man who has studied the carved doorways of Orissa, or the beaten silver of Southern temples has already possessed himself of a great language of the beautiful, and when he speaks in that language, in India, he will be understood by all, and outside India by those who are sufficiently trained, or sufficiently gifted. Now this language he will speak to perfection, because he himself will understand every line and curve of it. ...no artist can do work which is eternal in its quality, unless his pictures are couched in terms "understood of the people." All great expression, whether by writing or drawing or sculpture or what not,

is to some extent the outcry of a human heart for human sympathy, and men do not so cry in an unknown tongue.

* * * *

The highest art is always charged with spiritual intensity, with intellectual and emotional revelation. It follows that it requires the deepest and finest kind of education. The man who has not entered into the whole culture of his epoch can hardly create a supreme expression of that culture. The man whose own life is not tense with the communal struggle cannot utter to these about him the inner meaning of their secret hope.

In the great ages of the society, one thought permeates all classes alike. One mind, one spirit is everywhere. And this unity of ideal carries up on its high tides even the hidden craftsman in his secluded corner, till he becomes the mouthpiece of a national impulse. This fact it was that gave their greatness to the carvings at Elephanta, and the paintings at Ajanta. For speech is noteworthy, not in itself, but by dint of the power behind, that presses forward through the words. And so is with Art. Its rebirth in India today can only take place, if it be consciously made the servant and poet of the mighty dream of an Indian Nationality.

THE MESSAGE OF ART

Art, then, is charged with a spiritual message,—in India today, the message of the Nationality. But if this message is actually to be uttered, the profession of the painter must come to be regarded, not simply as a means of earning livelihood, but as one of the supreme ends of the highest kind of education...But how can a man be a painter of Nationality? Can an abstract idea be given form

and clothed with flesh, and painted? Undoubtedly it can. Indeed, if we had questioned this, Mr. A. N. Tagore's exquisite picture of "Bharatmata" would have proved its possibility. But it cannot be done all at once. Such an achievement lies amongst the higher reaches of artistic attainment, and would be impossible for the beginner, with his foot on the first rung of the ladder. How is he to proceed, that he may gradually rise to the delineation of such great ideal forms?

In the first place, it must be understood that art is concerned with the pleasure which we derive from sight. Not with the knowledge. The picture that ministers to *that* end is a scientific diagram, merely! The fundamental requisite, then, is a truthfulness of sense. Without the ability to decide promptly and finally that *like* or *dislike* a certain delineation, a certain situation, we shall inevitably go wrong in art. Not every scene is fit for a picture. And this truth needs emphasising in modern India especially, because here an erroneous conception of fashion has gone far to play havoc with the taste of the people... These errors proceed from a false ideal of correctness, which leads us to be untrue to the dictates of our own feeling.

Thus a true picture must be luminous, and it must be suggestive. It must, moreover, have a beautiful subject, which at once rouses our love and aspiration. Now Indian roads and streets and river-banks are full of subjects which would make such pictures; only we must have a *heart* to see them by. It is through the heart that the artist must do all his seeing. Indian women with their incomparable draperies; the beggars with the staff and begging-bowl that hints of Shiva; labour, beautiful in all lands, but here still further dignified by its wonderful gentleness and refinement; the priest in the temple, the boatman on the river, the mother with her child, the bride

stepping forth to the bridal, do you Indian students of Indian art see nothing in any of these that you long to record? Can you not go through life seeking for the glimpses that open up the great vistas? Have you not felt the beauty of the little earthen lamp set alight at evening beneath the *tulsi* plant? Have you not breathed the peace of the *Santi-jal* ceremony in the gathering dusk? Is there for you no mystic significance in the *Baran dala*?...Art, like education, like science, like industry, like trade itself, must now be followed for the remaking of the Motherland and for no other aim.

HINTS ON NATIONAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

Amongst her various activities in the cause of India, none occupied so important a place in the heart of Nivedita as the problems relating to education. Versed in the new education method introduced by Pestalozzi and Froebel, Nivedita made some practical suggestions for the solution of these problems. And a close study of them will at once reveal that they have not lost their value even today. India can make a big stride towards the development of education for her people, if she only cares to adopt them. It is unfortunate that the hints made by Nivedita on national education in India, have not yet received the attention they deserve.

The writings of Sister Nivedita in the awakening of a sense of want for national education among our countrymen and the implanting of civic interests in their hearts have been recognised as being quite extraordinary and deeply suggestive in their nature. We, who are so much distracted today and are casting about for a national life-principle, might do well to pay heed to this balm of inspiration which was the late Sister's special prerogative in life to administer to our drooping national consciousness and our fast-fleeting national vigour. She has, following

in the footsteps of her great Master, advised us to be men among men, to hold our heads high, in thought, word and deed, so that the glory and grandeur that were *Bharata-varsha*, in a sense far surpassing the glory that was Greece, or the grandeur that was Rome, in their own heyday, might find their resplendent home among us once more and draw all the rest of the world to Her. Even though she did not live to give us her complete thinking on the subject of education, which was so much near and dear to her heart, yet the outlines drawn by her are nonetheless important and useful in adapting our life and our education and through it to realise the ideal—our national ideal. Her book, *Hints on National Education in India* is a compilation of some of her best writings on matters of education. Originally it was published as a booklet under the title, *Hints on Education*. Most of the articles included in this book, first appeared in the *Modern Review* and the *Karmayogin*. That as an educationist Sister Nivedita held a pre-eminent position in India goes without saying and her writings in the sphere of education are worth perusing even today. The message and the direction which she has imparted to us so splendidly in her writings, have indeed a far-reaching importance in our everyday life and thought.

The contents of the book are as under: Primary Education: A call for Pioneers; Paper on Education (in five chapters); The Place of Foreign Culture in a true Education; The Future Education of the Indian Women; The Project of the Ramakrishna School for Girls; Suggestions for the Indian Vivekananda Societies; A Note on Historical Research; A Note on Cooperation; The Place of the Kindergarten in Indian Schools; Manual Training as a part of General Education in India; Manual Training in Education—Supplementary Note; Appendix.

The paper on *Manual Education* was published long ago in a pamphlet form and so was the *Project for the Ramakrishna Girls' School*, written as back as 1900, when the Sister was in America, trying to raise a fund for the starting of her school here, which she eventually succeeded though on a small scale. The chapters on Historical Research and on Cooperation, were at first written at the instance of two very eminent scholars.

Since its publication by *Udbodhan*, the book ran into four editions, the last edition appearing in 1950. Here we quote two chapters from the book, the first and the eighth.

PRIMARY EDUCATION—A CALL FOR PIONEERS

We all know that the future of India depends, for us, on education. Not that industry and commerce are unimportant, but because all things are possible to the educated and nothing whatever to the uneducated man. We know also that this education, to be of any avail, must extend through all degrees, from its lowest and humblest applications, up to the highest and most disinterested grades. We must have technical education, and we must have also higher research, because technical education, without higher research, is a branch without a tree, a blossom without a root. We must have education of women, as well as education of men. We must have secular education, as well as religious. And almost more important than any of these, we must have education of the people, and for this, we must depend upon ourselves.

Our civilisation has never been backward in bringing to the notice of the individual his responsibility to the society. There is none so poor that has never tried to feed the starving. From this time we must recognise the still greater urgency of giving knowledge. There is no other way of making the unity of our country effective. If one class of the people derive all their mental sustenance from one set of ideas, and the bulk of the population from something else, this unity, although certainly present, cannot easily be made effective. But if all the people talk the same language, learn to express themselves in the

same way, to feed their realisation upon the same ideas, if all are trained and equipped to respond in the same way to the same forces, then our unity will stand self-demonstrated, unflinching. We shall have acquired national solidarity and power of prompt and intelligent action. In this very act of universal education, the goal will have been attained and none could succeed in turning us back.

Nor need we regret that we fall back, for this upon our own strength. Education for the people is, in the first place, reading, writing and arithmetic. As long as we carry the burden ourselves, there need be no juggling with the geographical distribution of languages. But for artificial intervention Orissa, Bengal and Behar might now have been talking a single tongue, using a single script, quoting from a great consolidated literature. We must do all we can for the simplification of the language problem and for this nothing could be so effective as our own feeble action, infinitely preferable to the centralised, mechanical organisation.

Other advantage in our own effort is that it alone can be a permanent force. It depends upon no outside influence. Let the centralisers come and go and change as they will, the initiative that resides in the nerve ends themselves, remains in tact, can never be infringed. We have to build up this idea of the sacred duty of giving education to the people as one of the elements of our civilisation. Already we have the idea of giving alms. The one is only an extension of the other.

In most Western countries, it is required that every young man, when his education is complete, shall give three, four or five years to military service. He goes into barracks, is regimented and drilled, makes a unit in the standing army and passes out usually when his term is ended, an efficient soldier, to remain for the rest of his

life ready at any moment to join in the armed defence of his country.

What we have to do is, in like fashion, to organise the army of education. Why should it be thought impossible that every student, when his own education is over, should be called upon to give three years to the people? It is of course understood that just as the only son of a widow is in the West excused military service, so one whose earnings are absolutely necessary to others must be excused the educational service. The villagers, on the other hand, would easily maintain a single student, living amongst them as a school-master. And when his own three years were over it is to be supposed that he could, from his own old school or college, arrange for another to take his place. Some would learn to love the simple village life and elect to live and die poor school-masters. Most, however, would serve the years of their vow and pass on, returning to the city, to bear their part in the life a more complex community. On the one hand, the duty of teaching, on the other, the duty of maintaining, so the teacher and the taught make the perfect social unit. And so the great masses of the people might be swept within the circle of articulation. It takes thirty years to make a whole people literate, even supposing that an idea like this were carried out in its fullness. But with it we must not neglect the Asiatic device that makes every morsel of social service self-supporting and self-propagating. India never forgets to wing the seed that she has brought to ripeness. Along with the teaching must go the awaking responsibility for further teaching. "Alms to the teacher," and "Knowledge to the people" must be converse truths, taught at one and the same time.

No State central organisation could arrange a scheme like this. Only by a common impulse of the people and the students themselves could it be made a reality. But

it is not impossible. The initial thought comes, it is true, from the city, but once sent out, all depends upon the number of lives that can be laid upon its altar. All must always in the last resort depend upon this, the quantity and quality of human life that can be sacrificed to it. Without men's lives no seed of the mind germinates. How many will give up comfort, place, opportunity, ease, even perhaps their whole life for this, the elementary education of the Indian people?

THE FUTURE EDUCATION OF THE INDIAN WOMEN

Here in India the woman of the future haunts us. Her beauty rises on our vision perpetually. Her voice cries out on us. Until we have made ready a place for her, until we throw wide the portals of our life and go out and take her by the hand to bring her in, the Motherland Herself stands veiled and ineffective with eyes lost in set patience on the earth. It is essential for the joyous revealing of that great Mother that She be first surrounded by the mighty circle of these Her daughters, the Indian women of the days to come. It is they who must consecrate themselves before Her, touching Her feet with their proud heads and vowing to Her their own, their husbands' and their children's lives. Then and then only will she stand crowned before the world. Her sanctuary today is full of shadows. But when the womanhood of India can perform the great *arati* of nationality, that temple shall be all light, nay, the dawn verily shall be near at hand. From end to end of India all who understand are agreed that the education of our women must needs at this crisis undergo some revision. Without their

aid and cooperation none of the tasks of the present can be finally accomplished. The problems of the day are woman's as well as man's. And how idle were it to boast that our hearts are given to the Mother, unless we seek to enshrine Her in every one of our lives.

Indian hesitation, however, about a new type of feminine education has always been due to a misgiving as to its actual aims and in this the people have surely been wise. Have the women of the past been a source of shame to us, that we should hasten to discard their old-time grace and sweetness, their gentleness and piety, their tolerance and child-like depth of love and pity, in favour of the first crude product of Western information and social aggressiveness? On this point India speaks with no uncertain voice. "Granted," she says in effect, "that a more arduous range of mental equipment is now required by women, it is nevertheless better to fail in the acquisition of this than to fail in the more essential demand made by the old type of training on character. An education of the brain that uprooted humility and took away tenderness would be no true education at all. These virtues may find different forms of expression in mediaeval and modern civilisations, but they are necessary in both. All education worth having must first devote itself to the developing and consolidating of character and only secondarily concern itself with intellectual accomplishment.

The question that has to be solved for Indian women, therefore, is a form of education that might attain this end of developing the faculties of soul and mind in harmony with one another. Once such a form shall be successfully thought out and its adequacy demonstrated, we shall, without further ado, have an era amongst us of Woman's Education. Each successful experiment will be the signal for a circle of new attempts. Already there is

longing enough abroad to serve the cause of woman. All that we ask is to be shown the way.

Important to education as is the question of method, it is still only subordinate to that our purpose. It is our fundamental motive that tells in the development we attempt to give our children. It is therefore the more urgently necessary that in the training of girls we should have a clearly-understood ideal towards which to work. And in this particular respect there is perhaps no other country in the world so fortunately placed as India. She is, above all others, the land of great women. Wherever we turn, whether to history or to literature, we are met on every hand by those figures, whose strength she mothered and recognised, while she keeps their memory eternally sacred.

What is the type of woman we must admire? Is she strong, resourceful, inspired, fit for moments of crisis? Have we not Padmini of Cheetore, Chand Bibi, Jhansi Rani? Is she saintly, a poet and a mystic? Is there not Meera Bai? Is she the queen, great in administration? Where is Rani Bhawani, where Ahalya Bai, where Janhavi of Mymensingh? Is it wifehood in which we deem that woman shines brightest? What of Sati, of Savitri, of the ever glorious Sita? Is it in maidenhood? There is Uma. And where in all the womanhood of the world shall be found another as grand as Gandhari?

These ideals moreover are constructive. That is to say, it is not their fame and glory that the Indian child is trained to contemplate. It is their holiness, simplicity, sincerity—in a word, their character. This, indeed, is always a difference between one's own and an alien ideal. Impressed by the first, it is an effort that we seek to imitate: admiring the second, we endeavour to arrive at its results. There can never be any sound education of the Indian woman, which does not begin and end in

exaltation of the national ideals of womanhood as embodied in her own history and heroic literature.

But woman must undoubtedly be made *efficient*. Sita and Savitri were great in wifehood, only as the fruit of that antecedent fact that they were great women. There was no place in life that they did not fill graciously and dutifully. Both satisfied every demand of the social ideal. At once queen and housewife, saint and citizen, submissive wife and solitary nun, as heroic combatant, both were equal to all the parts permitted them in the drama of their time. Perfect wife as they were, if they had never been married at all they must have been perfect just the same, as daughters, sisters and disciples. This efficiency to all the circumstances of life, this womanhood before wifehood and humanity before womanhood is something at which the education of the girl must aim in every age.

But the moral ideal of the India of today has taken on new dimensions—the national and civic. Here also the woman must be trained to play her part. And again, by struggling towards these she will be educated. Every age has its own intellectual synthesis, which must be apprehended before the ideal of that age can be attained. The numberless pathways of definite mental concept by which the orthodox Hindu woman must go to self-fulfilment, form to the Western mind a veritable labyrinth. So far from being really uneducated or non-educated, indeed, as is so commonly assumed, the conservative Hindu woman has received an education which in its own way is highly specialised, only it is not a type recognised as of value by modern peoples.

Similarly, in order to achieve the ideal of efficiency for the exigencies of the twentieth century, a characteristic synthesis has to be acquired. It is no longer merely the spiritual or emotional content of a statement that has to be conveyed to the learner, as in the mythologico-

social culture of the past. The student must now seek to understand the limitations of the statement, its relation to cognate ideas and the steps by which the race has come to this particular formulation. The modern synthesis, in other words, is scientific, geographical and historical, and these three modes of knowing must needs—since there is no sex in truth—be achieved by woman as by man.

Science, history and geography are thus as three dimensions in which the mind of the present age moves and from which it seeks to envisage all ideas. Thus the conception of nationality—on which Indian efforts today converge—must be realised by us, in the first place, as a result of the study of history of our own nation with all its divergent elements of custom, race, language and the rest. The civic sense, in the same way must be reached by a study of our own cities, their positions and the history of their changes from age to age.

Again, the nation must be seen not only in relation to its own past and its own place, but also in relation to other nations. Here we come upon the necessity of geographical knowledge. Again, history must be viewed geographically and geography historically. A great part of the glory and dignity of the ideally modern woman lies in her knowledge that her house is but a tent pitched for a night on the star-lit world-plane, that each hour as it passes is but a drop from an infinite stream, flowing through her hand to be used as she will for benediction or for sorrow and then to flow on irresistibly again. And behind such an attitude of mind lies a severe intellectual discipline. But even the proportion, which the personal moment bears to space and time, is not formula enough for the modern spirit. This demands, in addition, that we learn what is to it the meaning of the truth or science, the fact in itself. This particular conception of truth is

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perhaps no more absolute than others, current in other ages, but it is characteristic of the times and by those who have to pass the world's test, it has to be understood.

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Education can never be carried out by criticism or discouragement. Only he who sees the noblest thing in the taught can be an effective teacher. Only by the greatness of Indian life can we give a sense of the greatness of the world outside India. Only by the love of our own people can we learn the love of humanity, and only by a profound belief in the future of the Indian woman can any man be made worthy to help in bringing that future about. Let the preacher of the New Learning be consecrated to the vision of one who resumes into herself the greatness of the whole Indian past. Let him hope and most earnestly pray that in this our time in all our villages we are to see women great even as Gandhari, faithful and brave as Savitri, holy and full of tenderness as Sita. Let the past be as wings unto the feet of the future. Let all that has been be as steps leading us up the mountain of what is yet to be. Let every Indian woman incarnate for us the whole spirit of the Mother and the culture and protection of the Homeland.

AGGRESSIVE HINDUISM

This is rather a booklet consisting of only 37 pages containing four inspiring articles: The Basis; The Task Before Us; The Ideal; On The Way To The Ideal.

These four articles were, in fact, four lectures which Sister Nivedita delivered during the early Swadeshi days from the platform of the Town Hall and it is needless to say that each of these lectures drew crowded audience. The very title of the book reflects the subject-matter discussed

in it. These speeches when they came out first in booklet form were very popular with the student community with whom the views of Nivedita on aggressive Hinduism became almost like Gospel. They found inspiration in every word uttered by the Sister and the speeches fired their imagination and inspired them in a manner never experienced by them.

We give below appropriate excerpts from the second chapter of this booklet.

THE TASK BEFORE US

“Forgiveness, if weak and passive, is not good;
fight is better.

Forgive, when you can bring legions of angels
to an easy victory”

—*Swami Vivekananda.*

It is small wonder if, in the act of transition from old forms to new—from a mode of thought some centuries venerable to one untried and at best but modern,—it is small wonder if in the throes of so great a crisis, India should have passed through a generation or two of intellectual confusion. The astonishing phenomenon is rather the speed and ease of her readjustment. Within fifty years to have assimilated a new language and that of an unforeseen type, and to have made changes at almost every rung in the ladder of ideal culture,—is this a little thing? Is it a fact that could be duplicated anywhere? To speak in reply of Japan is mere foolishness. The problem of Japan, when midway through the nineteenth century, could hardly be compared with that of India.

The trouble hitherto has been that the people were as passive to modern culture as to ancient. In a land where the segregation of the soul has been the aim of the highest

thought and life for thousands of years, it has not been easy to turn every energy suddenly in the direction of activity and mutual cooperation. At bottom, however, there is strength enough in India and in spite of the demoralisation of hunger and baffled hope, her people are about to set foot on the threshold of a new era. The ebb of the tide has already reached its utmost. The reaction of fortune is about to commence. That this is so is due to the fact that at the beginning of the twentieth century the Indian people can take a bird's eye-view of their past history, and are able to understand clearly their true position.

There is a saying in India that to see through *Maya* is to destroy her. But few realise how literally this is true. The disaster or difficulty that has ceased to confuse and bewilder us is about to be defeated. The evil about which we can think and express ourselves clearly has already lost its power. To measure our defeat accurately is to reverse it. When a people, as a people, from the highest to the lowest, are united in straight and steady understanding of their circumstances without doubt and without illusion, then events are about to precipitate themselves. Discrimination is the mark of the highest spirituality. Spirituality is the only irresistible force. Like the fire that wraps a forest in flame, is the power of the mind of a whole nation.

From the year 1858 onwards there has been no possible goal for the Indian people but a complete assimilation of the modern consciousness. At that point the Mediaeval order was at an end. Prithvi Raj and Shah Jehan, Asoka and Akbar were mingled in a common oblivion. Only the soil they had loved, only the people they had led, remained, to address themselves to a new task, to stand or fall by their power to cope with a new condition. Sharp as the contrast between the Ganga and

the Jumna was the difference between Mediaeval and the Modern. Invincible as the restless current of the Bhagirathi is that new India, that is to be born of both.

Up to the present, however, in the exhaustion of the transition, it has not been possible for the national mind to envisage the problem so as to see or state its terms clearly. Today this first stage is over. The Indian mind is no longer in blind collapse. It is awakening to fresh strength, and about to survey both past and present, that by their means it may determine and forecast its future.

We must create a history of India in living terms. Up to the present that history, as written in English, practically begins with Warren Hastings, and crams in certain unavoidable preliminaries, which cover a few thousands of years, and, troublesome as they are, cannot be altogether omitted! All this is merely childish and has to be humanised, emotionalised, made the trumpet-voice and evangel of the races that inhabit India.

Throw yourselves, children of India, into the worship of your whole past. Strive passionately for knowledge. For with you and not with the foreigner, are the thought and language that will make it easy to unearth the old significance. India's whole hope lies in a deeper research, a more rigid investigation of facts. With her, encouragement and not despair, is on the side of truth! Great literatures have to be created in each of the vernaculars. These literatures must voice the past, translate the present, forecast the future. The science and the imagination of Europe have to be brought, through the vernacular, to every door. India cannot afford to imitate foreign institutions. Neither can she afford to remain ignorant of foreign ideals. The history of the past has to be re-written, in simple terms.

Art must be reborn. Not the miserable travesty of would-be Europeanism that we at present know. There is no voice like that of art to reach the people. A song, a picture—these are the fiery cross, that reaches all the tribes and makes them one. And art will be reborn, for she has found a new subject—India herself...But far more, on behalf of India herself, do we need artists, half poets and half draughtsmen, who can wake in us the great new senses. We want men of the Indian blood, who can portray for us the men of old in such fashion as to stir the blood. We want through these to feel out, as a people, towards the new duties of the time to be. Not only to utter India to the world, but also to voice India to herself—this is the mission, and this is the task before us. This is the battle that opens before the present generation. Our national life is become perforce a national assault.

RELIGION AND DHARMA

This work of Sister Nivedita is chiefly a compilation of brief notes and articles which she used to contribute in the editorial columns of the two well-known monthly journals, such as the *Modern Review* and the *Prabuddha Bharat*. These notes and articles were suggested chiefly by the ethical and religious aspects of the advancing national movement. The book was first published by Longmans, Green & Co. in the year 1915, that is, four years after the death of its author and the first Indian edition of it came out only in 1952.

The book contains an interesting preface written by Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe, formerly an editor of the *Statesman* and a great admirer of Sister Nivedita. Mr. Ratcliffe says in course of his preface:

"From an early stage of her life in India Sister Nivedita was closely in touch with the student community, especially in Bengal where her work lay. She was at the

call of almost any group, so long as she was satisfied that there were sincere seekers among them, and her influence spread widely and rapidly, alike through her public addresses, which were eagerly welcomed, and through the exercise of her personal sympathy and counsel...None saw more clearly than Sister Nivedita, from the beginning, the possibilities and the perils of Indian nationalism as then understood and preached. There were many, both Indian and European, to insist upon difficulties, or the futility, of the nationalist conception and aim; to argue that it was but one more expression of the chaos wrought by the working of the West upon the East. The confusion was not to be denied; but Sister Nivedita had no doubt as to the capacity of the Indian mind and character to emerge. To her, the striking characteristic of the Transition was the speed with which, in the nineteenth century, the ancient social order of India had adjusted herself to the demands of a modern alien civilization. The later steps should be not more, but less, difficult since they would be conscious and controlled. They must, in Sister Nivedita's view, be taken by India itself. There could, she held, be no question as to the power of the Indian consciousness to absorb the contribution of the West and to transmute it; and the way to that she saw through an exchange of organic ideals between East and West. For India it would mean a renaissance of *Dharma*: In other words, a re-interpretation in modern terms of the faith and practice of the past; a fresh conception of worship and of sacrifice to the ideal; the monastic ideal expressed in social service; the recovery of the civic sense, and its re-establishment in a fuller understanding of the Indian social order, the exaltation of work, of positive character, and of knowledge, in which alone could lie the mastery of the future."

Such is the theme of the articles contained in the book, *Religion and Dharma*. In fairness to the memory of the author, and for their right understanding, they should be read with a recollection of the circumstances amidst which they were thrown off—with great rapidity in the midst of a crowded and arduous life of service in India. Some readers may wonder at the implied antithesis in the title between an English and a Sanskrit word which

are taken to be practically indetical in meaning. *Dharma*, however, is a word that to the Hindu has a larger and more complex significance than that of Religion as commonly used among the Europeans. It includes the whole social conception of law and conduct and worship. *Dharma* is the force or principle that binds together; the union of traditional thought and faith of common custom, loyalty, and understanding, that makes of society an organic or religious unity. "This patience, this steadfastness, this sincerity," Sister Nivedita wrote, "is *Dharma*—the substance, the self-ness, of things and of men." She preferred to translate the word as the National Righteousness, and on the whole perhaps that is as close to an equivalent term in English as the Western readers may hope to achieve. According to her *Dharma* is a finer and more satisfying word for the living principle of conduct and society—finer and more satisfying in the measure of the infinitely more rich and profound conception which we have of religion than the conception reached by the people in the West.

The preface to the Indian edition has the following words:

"We are glad to place before the public this first Indian edition of Sister Nivedita's inspiring book *Religion and Dharma*. These were essays written in the early years of this century to uplift and arouse the young men and women of India so that they can fulfil the great destiny which Nivedita saw was awaiting them in the days ahead. Some of these essays will seem prophetic to present-day readers."

The Indian edition has been published by the Advaita Ashrama. As the book was written for an almost exclusively Indian audience, the author appended for the assistance of the European reader a brief glossary of the Sanskrit words in the text which shows her depth of erudition of the Indian scriptures.

The contents of the book are as follow:

Religion and Dharma; Mukti: Freedom; The Greater Ritual; The Crown of Hinduism; Hinduism and Organization; Co-operation; Sectarianism; The Samaj: The Past and the Future; Religion and National Success; The Spirit of Renunciation; The Sacred and the Secular; Quit

Ye Like Men!; Sincerity, Facing Death; Luxury and Mannood; Strength; True Ambition; Character; Discrimination; Fitness; The Teacher; The Guru and the Disciple; Self-Idealism; Realization; Progress; Work; Realization Through Work; The Power of Faith; The Bee and the Lotus; The Life of Ideas; The Shaping of Life; National Righteousness; The Flower of Worship; Responsibility; The World-sense in Ethics; Character is Spirituality; The Task before Us; The Ideal.

RELIGION AND DHARMA

Every religion centres round some particular idea: Ancient Egypt round death; Persia round the mystery of Good and Evil; Christianity round the redeeming love of a divine Incarnation. Only Hinduism aims at the heights of *Vairagyam* and *Mukti*, and at nothing secular. This is indeed the weak point of Hinduism. The quality by which Hinduism has it in power to make up for this defect of her greatness, is her capacity for synthetizing every religious idea with which she comes in contact. The absorptive power of Hinduism as a religion, coupled with its resistant power as a civilization, furnishes one of the most startling paradoxes in the history of man. Derived originally from a veritable network of religions, in which the co-ordinating element was the philosophy now known as Vedanta, it has thrown out reforming sects in the Christian period, each of these being in fact the expression of its admiration for the new ideal of which it has caught a glimpse.

Today, however, Hindus see that the greatest call upon religious instincts of the country lies in the need of assimilating whole new areas of life. We must make possible the "short views" of the Christians. There must

be some religious teaching and encouragement for those who only want heaven, not *Mukti*. There must be recognition of *righteousness*, as well as of holiness. Righteousness lies in duty done: holiness requires renunciation. A thousand good citizens are necessary, as the background of one great *sannyasin*. There must then be a philosophy of citizenship, as well as of *Sannyas*.

And in truth the exaltation of one thing does not demand the decrying of its fellow. The ideal is always divine. A highly moralised society produces the greatest saints. The purity of fathers and mothers makes possible the birth of Avatars. Where marriage is faithfully kept, there sincere *Sannyas* is possible, not amongst profligates and riotous lovers. Similarly the presence of honourable citizens is necessary to the maintenance of a grand religious ideal, and the citizen is as necessary to its manifestation as the monk.

But if this is so, we have to search our ancient scriptures with a new aim. We must seek for all that can support and encourage us in doing manfully the work of this present world. Renunciation can be achieved through duty quite as well as by the abandonment of duty. We have thousands of texts to tell us so, but the prevailing preconception in favour of *Sannyas* has led to our ignoring all that favours *Dharma*. The weak point of European society lies in the absence of the monastic ideal. True. But equally sure is it that the weak point of Hinduism is the want of emphasis on the ideal of the householder and the citizen. The reason lies largely in the fact that when our texts were formulated our society was as rich in virtue as in material resources. When the last of these deserts us, it is difficult to prevent the decay of the former; and what is wanted today is a deliberate recapture of both.

For this, we must exalt work. We must look upon

the world as a school, in which it is worth while to strive for promotion from class to class. We must set our shoulder to the wheel and struggle unceasingly to attain the end we have set before ourselves. Our philosophy tells us that absolute progress is impossible in the things of this life. But relative progress is fully possible; and while we move on this plane of relativity, we must work as if perfection would reward the very next step.

Let us set before ourselves the master-ideals, even in things relative. "I do not make good screws, sir, I make the best that can be made," said an indignant workman in reply to too casual an inquiry. This ought to be our attitude. We must make the best screws that can possibly be made. In every direction it must be the same. The best not too good, the highest not too difficult, for us to attain. Nothing less than the utmost. Nothing easy. Nothing cheap. The same energy that might have made an ascetic will also make a workman, if that will better serve the Mother's purpose.

And let our ideals be higher for our friends also. Let no man consort with mean company. Monk or citizen, let a man be noble. Whether Brahmin or pariah, let him practise self-respect, and demand the like from others. We help no one by being so passive as to convert him into a brute!

In the school, the lessons are graduated, but all alike are EDUCATION. All are equally the concern of the school-authorities. Even so with our civilization. The integrity of the man of business is to the full as acceptable as an offerings as the renunciation of the monk, for unless there be honest men of the world, the religious orders must come to an end.

Thus Hinduism, fully recognizing the need of the practical and secular life, and drawing from within herself the stores that are necessary for its development and growth, synthetizes once more ideals that seemed opposite. The super-social life is seen in its true relation to society. The goal is preached as attainable, not only by the *sadhu* in the forest, but also by the butcher in the town and the wife in the home.

THE LIFE OF IDEAS

Great is the life of ideas. Men die that an idea may live. Generation after generation may pass away, while the idea on which they were threaded grows only the stronger for their decay. Let none, then, feel that in his own defeat lies any disaster to truth. A life given? What of that? Thought may be enriched by the death of thinkers! What is any one of us, unless the Infinite Light is seen behind and through him? And for the Light to be seen, may it not sometimes be needful that the vessel should be broken?

How often it happens that everything a man has believed is summed up and asserted in the moment of his death? Death consecrates. Death renders impersonal. It suddenly withdraws from the sight of others all the petty nervous irritations that have veiled the man's real intention and he stands revealed in his greatness, instead of his littleness, before the contemporaries.

It sometimes happens that the greatest service a man can render is to retire. Great men always take care to withdraw when the message is uttered. Only alone, and in freedom, can the child or the student or the disciple work out the idea that has reached him. The

seed is buried while it germinates. The obscure process of development would only suffer check from the attempt to watch and regulate. We seek ever to give birth to the greater-than-ourselves. But for this, it is essential that we seek not to see results. To give and die; to speak and leave free; to act, looking for no fruit; this is the great mood, that paves the way for the world-changes.

How many could throw themselves from the palm-tree's height? Those who are able to do this, having faith in truth, are the fathers of the future, the masters of the world, because only through them can the Impersonal flow in its fulness. Says a Christian hymn:

"Oh to be nothing, nothing!
 Only to lie at His feet,
 A broken and empty vessel,
 For the Master's use made meet!
 Empty that He may fill me,
 As forth to His service I go!
 Broken that so more freely,
 His life through mine may flow!"

TRUE AMBITION

Every man's estimate of himself is a focussing-point for his estimate of the society to which he belongs. Is there anything that makes proud like the consciousness of family? Is there anything that makes sensitive like pride of race? That man who gives high respect to others is the same who demands the finest courtesy for himself. By the freedom we constantly assert, we appraise the freedom of our blood in the eyes of the whole world.

The pride of birth has been cultivated in India, for thousands of years, as a social and national safeguard.

Like other forms of pride, it is a virtue when it is positive, and a vice only when it denies the right of equal pride to others. The vanity that cuts us off from the community, telling us that we are better than they, is petty and vulgar, and while it humiliates those whom we would insult, it only makes a laughing-stock of ourselves in the eyes of all who are competent to judge. However celebrated our family, it is hardly possible to be of such exalted birth that there is not anyone else in any single respect still more exalted. Our joy therefore can at best be but relative, till it may dawn upon us that the greatest distinction lies in simplicity, and that privilege or monopoly is, after all, conterminous with meanness.

Pride of birth, in fact, like other forms of *Karma*, should be regarded as an opportunity, a responsibility, a trust. The higher my position, the more difficult and arduous my duty. The purer my inheritance, the greater my power of endurance. If we but could see truly, we should know that to be a man is to be nobly born, and our merit remains for us to prove. All things are possible to all men, for equally are they expressions of the Infinite, the Pure, the All-knowing, the Free. Man may make distinctions between man and man. But God makes none. He opens to each one of us the franchise of struggle, and leaves it to us to make our own place.

Oh for lofty ambitions! What shall we do with our lives? Let us swear to eliminate self. Walking any path, doing any task, let us pursue the ideal for its own sake, the ideal to the utmost, the ideal to the end. Whatever we do, let us do it with our might. Spurning ease, forsaking gain, renouncing self, let us snatch the highest achievement that offers itself, at any cost, and cease not from struggle till it is in our hands. This is what was meant by the ancient reformers, when they said "he who attains to God is the true Brahmin." Birth was but a

preliminary condition, and that not essential; it could never be substituted for the end itself.

Let us do away with trumpety ambitions! Let us learn in order to teach the world, in order to win truth for Humanity, not in order to strut in borrowed plumes before a village crowd. Let us be severe with ourselves. Let us know, on the subject we take up, all that there is to be known. Let us read great books. Let us make perfect collections. No difficulty should daunt us. Fate offers obstacles that man may overcome. Thus he becomes the nursling of the gods, gifted with divine strength, and seats himself amidst the immortals.

In great struggles all men are equal. Anyone may enter these lists. The prize is to the winner, high or low, man or woman. But no man can rise alone. Our society sets us a high standard, and shining there, we succeed before the world. Thus each one is aided by the victory of any other, and the glory of one is the glory of all, and the greatness of one is the greatness of all.

KALI THE MOTHER

Kali the Mother is a collection of excellent essays on the Divine Mother of the Universe, written from an intensely personal point of view blended with an extraordinary metaphysical insight into the cosmic aspect of the Kali ideal. No one who wants to understand the traditional Indian worship of the Terrible in Nature as an aspect of God, can afford to miss a perusal of this brilliant study. Though written in 1897, it has a perennially absorbing interest for every reader interested in the search for the Truth in all its infinite aspects. It is interesting to note in this connection that Sri Aurobindo while at Baroda was first drawn to the spiritual intellect of Sister Nivedita chiefly on account of this book which he

read with considerable interest and he spoke highly about it personally to Nivedita when he met her at Baroda for the first time in 1902, a few months after the death of Swami Vivekananda.

The first Indian edition of the book came out in 1950 while the first and the subsequent two editions were published in England. The contents of the book are as follows: Concerning Symbols; The Vision of Siva; Two Saints of Kali; The Voice of the Mother; A Visit to Dukineshwar; An Intercession; The Story of Kali for a Western Baby.

In addition to these pieces the book also contains a poem entitled *Kali The Mother* by Swami Vivekananda.

In the chapter, *Two Saints of Kali*, Nivedita has discussed the spiritual lives of Ramprasad and Ramakrishna. Below we give extracts from the latter part of this interesting chapter, i.e. Ramakrishna.

RAMAKRISHNA

It is not as the interpreter of man's love to God, but as the great Incarnation of the spirit of the Mother towards Her children, that we kneel at the feet of Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

"So large loomed the Divine through Ramakrishna (who used to live in the Temple-Garden of Dukineshwar, near Calcutta, that many of those who knew and loved him then, speak his name to this day with bated breath, calling him, 'Our Lord.'

For in the case of Ramakrishna, innumerable prayers and unheard of austerities had culminated in a realisation so profound that there was scarcely a memory of selfhood left. The man who lived and moved before his disciples was a mere shell, that could not fail to act as the indwelling motherhood willed. He never used, it is said, the expression 'I' and "mine", preferring 'He who dwells

here' (indicating his own heart), or usually 'My holy Mother.'

That his original physique must have been extraordinary, we can infer, since it stood the strain under which his religious yearning hurried it, for fifty years. But far more wonderful was the complexity and many-sidedness of character and of development, that made him feel the perplexities of every heart as if they were his own. His was, probably, the only really universal mind of modern times. Yet the whole was wrought to such a unity that the peace of it fills to this day the little chamber where he dwelt, and abides like a mighty presence under the great tree of meditation.

Here great scholars and potentates have been proud to be received—'And they seemed,' said one who was often present, 'like children before our Lord!'

He, at least knew nothing of the difference made by wealth and learning in the world. He dismissed the most important man of his district with a frown from his presence because he stood upon his riches and his name; he would leave companies of distinguished persons to themselves; and he would spend hours listening to the confidences of an anxious woman about her home, or in the instruction of some nameless lad. Yet his touch fell on none lightly. A great preacher, known to the West as to the East, changed his teaching when he knew him, in this new thought of the Motherhood of God. And many of the strongest men in India today, sat at his feet in their boyhood. An unlettered peasant, from the Brahmins of the villages scarcely able to read and write he seemed, yet if original thought and wide reading are enough, he was a profound scholar. For he had a remarkable ear and memory that made him retain the sounds of the Sanskrit perfectly, with the translation, and as a vast quantity of literature was read and recited to him from

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time to time, he had acquired in this way an uncommonly large store.

In those years of which we are now speaking, the last twenty of his life, he was a great light, known as a saint throughout Bengal, the North-West Provinces and Nepal, and much visited, in the informal Eastern way. Men felt themselves in his presence to be dealing with forces that they could not gauge, drawing on wisdom which they were unable to fathom. As if he were great music, they touched there the state that mighty music hints at, and went away saner, sweeter, stronger to their daily tasks.

Yet all this time his real inner life was lived amongst that group of young men who had foresworn the common motives of existence, to call themselves his disciples. He was rarely without one or two in immediate attendance, and many were with him day and night for weeks and months together.

Some were mere boys, and it was fitting that laughter and frolic should make a large part of the life together. Their Master was never sad. A gentle gaiety seemed the very air he breathed, broken indeed by the constant trance of rapture, and by the wonderful inspiration of his mood afterwards. "When it is night to all beings, then is the man of self-control awake: when all beings are awake, then is the night of the man of knowledge," he would chant, waking them during the dark hours to come out and meditate in the starlight, while many a day was spent swinging on the elephant creeper that his own hands had planted, amidst laughter and picknicking in the garden. The stream of days went on, without apparent plan or purpose,—yet all unnoticed a few leading ideas were being insisted on; a story here and there was building up the knowledge of that tremendous struggle through which he had attained to peace; they were watching him

deal with men and things: above all, they were bathing in that Ocean of the Real to which his presence was a perpetual access.

And is not this the wisest of all teaching, to make sure of essentials, and leave the minds of the instructed to work out their own results, like the young plant growing up from seed? For we may be sure of one thing,—the order that is imposed upon us may become geometrical, but only the order that we create ourselves can become organic. It was the old Indian ideal of a university, to live in the forest with the Master and realise the meaning of culture in the touch of his personality.

These men to whom Ramakrishna Paramahansa entrusted the mission and teaching of his "Divine Mother"—for he never dreamt of them as his own,—were chiefly graduates from the neighbouring colleges, many of them deeply tinged with the Western reaction which was the temper of that day...They had conceived the idea that India was being ruined by idolatry, and that the one thing incumbent on them was to do what in them lay, to sweep away every image and relic of degraded superstition, and to work for her emancipation from caste, from the zenana system, and from whatever else had till now been considered her distinctive institutions. Speaking broadly, many of the finest minds of the Indian universities of that time felt thus, and these young disciples of Ramakrishna were among their following.

Suddenly they found themselves face to face with this ascetic saint of the old orthodox Hindu pattern. Gentle, without solemnity or affectation, full of humour, living in his garden almost nude, knowing little of the English save on hearsay, as a queer folk from overseas, the old man held them by a spell they could neither analyse nor break. His perfect sympathy and gigantic

purity made themselves felt even by youth, but against his intellect some made a desperate resistance. Long, long after, one of them said, "I was always looking for something that would prove him to be holy! It took me six years to understand that *he was not holy*, because he had become holiness itself!"

He was glad to hear all they could tell him of the Bible. Christianity was in the air in those days, and he had loved Christ and worshipped him long before they came to him; but he bated no jot of his own devotion to Kali. "As sugar," he said, "is made into various figures of birds and beasts, so one sweet Mother Divine is worshipped in various climes and ages under various names and forms. Different creeds are but different paths to reach the Supreme.

* * * *

But it was not Kali only; there was not a symbol in India that he had not worshipped and did not love; not a worshipper, by whatever rite, whose special need he had not felt in his own nature, and borne till it was satisfied; not a prayer, or ecstasy, or vision that he did not reverence and understand, giving its true place in a growing knowledge. He was in fact the most perfect religious culture that the mind can conceive. The doctrine that 'different creeds are but different paths to reach God,' propounded in a general way, was not new in India. But taught as this man taught it, with his strong contention that it was the actual duty of men to follow their own faith, for the world gained by many-centredness; with his intense conviction 'in whatsoever name or form you desire to know God, in that very name and form you will see Him;' with his assurance that rites and ceremonies contain religious experience, as the husk contains the germ; and above all, with that love that said of every faith, 'Bow down and adore where others

kneel, for where so many have worshipped, the Lord will manifest Himself.'—It was unique in the world's history.

To those who have learnt even a little of the authenticity of the religious consciousness, it is not difficult to see intellectually that creeds may bear to each other the relation of contemporary languages all expressive of that one consciousness. But Ramakrishna in the garden of the Kali-temple, was direct embodiment of the impulse to speak to each in his own language and tell him how to reach the goal. In this man's love there was no limitation anywhere. His longing was for the salvation of every soul in a whole world.

Ramakrishna had inherited the long-garnared knowledge of his race, that religion is no matter of belief but of experience. But his whole nature had gone down in passionate yearning for the Mother Herself. One question, "is this real? is this real?" rang eternally in his ears. And he could not perform efficiently even the simple task of acting as assistant priest in the Kali-temple at Dukineswar. His duty was to swing lights and flowers before the image, in the beautiful arati ceremony. Sometimes he would forget them altogether, lost in a maze of agonised supplication. The tale went about that he was mad, and as, everywhere, people will try by a dose of this world to drive out the other, his relations decided that the distraction of a wedding would give him his only chance of a cure. It was in this way that he was married to a little girl who long afterwards came to him and became one of the greatest of his disciples.

But a wedding-feast proved no mitigation of a struggle so tremendous, so overwhelmingly actual, and he had to be released from his stint of work. Driven on by his own nature, impelled from within by that irresistible necessity that had called him into being without one rest or

relaxation, for twelve long years at least, he persisted in that inner warfare. Then, at last, the goal was attained. The Mother revealed Herself. From that moment his personality was that of a little child, satisfied that he was in Her arms. He had discovered a great secret, when he would break a disposition, he would reduce it to a concrete instance, and battle with it there. It was so that he had night after night performed this act of cleansing that was to rid him of social pride.

Then came the strangest phase of all. He would realise God as a woman! It was the flowering point of a certain tender chivalry that had always marked him, and makes his life the true emancipation of Indian women. His method, here and always, was the same,—to forget his own past and cause it to be forgotten. So he made every detail of their lives his own and went to visit his wife in her village home, that he might find his friends entirely amongst her acquaintances and share every joy and sorrow of their hearts. Till at last he satisfied himself that the secret victory could also be attained in the straight path of womanhood.

And herein lies the gist of his life. As a mother's love justifies the existence of all her children, however unsympathetically they be judged by others, so he, the embodiment of the World-Mother, would take up whole areas of living and assert the place of each in the complete harmony of life.

We learn in him that greatness, and harmony, and beauty are all results. Our concern is not with them, but with those more elemental matters of simplicity and sincerity and whole-hearted devotion that lie close to us. He is a witness to the world that the old Indian wisdom was not in vain. It is of course true that in no other

country could he have occurred. In him meet the feeling, and thought of all mankind, and he, Ramakrishna, the devotee of Kali, represents *Humanity*.

NOTES OF SOME WANDERINGS WITH THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

This is an interesting travellogue written by Sister Nivedita. Along with the accounts of some cities in northern India and Kashmir and Amarnath which she visited in company of her Master, the book also presents intimate touches of the private life Vivekananda, the friend and teacher in one, and portrays Sister Nivedita as a disciple in making. The Master's characteristically illuminating talks on a variety of subjects together with the Sister's fascinating way of writing, make the book an exceedingly instructive and entertaining study.

In course of a lengthy review of the book, published shortly after Nivedita's death, Bipin Chandra Pal wrote: "In this small but intensely interesting volume we get a glimpse of the inner character of Nivedita's soul, more perhaps than in any other of her books. Her object in these pages was not really to portray herself, but rather to study and understand her Master. It is Vivekananda here and Vivekananda there, and Vivekananda all over. These pages were not written originally, I think, for the public eye. These are the jottings of Nivedita's thoughts and impressions of what were clearly the most momentous days of her life. It was during her first visit to India, that she went about the Himalayas, at Nainital, Almora and Kashmir, with Vivekananda and his party; and these pages are her private record of that pilgrimage. And they show how gradually the spirit of her Master possessed her, and through his life and love she was able to see India and her peoples, her thoughts and institutions, her religion and her rituals in a light such as had never been vouchsafed before to any foreigner. Here the devoted disciple, lost in the love of the Master, in trying to preserve the sacred recollections of his words, incidentally

paints also her own innermost soul, a painting which is the more faithful and fascinating because it is absolutely unconscious. It is a beautiful picture of Vivekananda in Nivedita, and Nivedita in Vivekananda; the Master in the Disciple and the Disciple in the Master;—the Two thus made One."

Nivedita visited many sacred places of India, undergoing privations and hardships like any Hindu pilgrim, and explained the inner significance of the *Tirthas* in her own novel way, said Sir Jadunath Sarkar who himself accompanied the Sister when she visited Bodh Gaya. The holy *Tirthas* on hills and river junctions were again described by her as "evidences of the geographical consciousness of the ancient India.

The Wanderings like its complementary volume, *Kedarnath and Badrinarayan*, is a charming book written in her inimitable style combined with her power of observation. The book has so far run into three editions, the third edition coming out in 1948. It is an Udbodhan publication. Originally the book first appeared as a serial in the *Brahmavadin* of Madras. Swami Saradananda who had the honour of editing this book, has written in the Preface of the book: "The Editor hopes that the book, which offers bright glimpses of the yet undiscovered nooks of the private life of the great Swami Vivekananda, and the period of training through which the much lamented Sister Nivedita had to pass in the hands of her Master, ere she came out before the public gaze as the wonderful champion of truth and justice and righteousness and of the cause of India—will meet with the warm reception at the hands of the public, that it fully deserves." The reader who has once read this book will fully agree with the Editor.

The Contents of the book are as follow: The Home on the Ganges; At Nainital and Almora; Morning Talks at Almora; On the way to Kathgodam; On the way to Baramulla; The Vale of Kashmir; Life at Srinagar; The Temple of Pandrenthan; Walks and Talks Beside the Jhellum; The Shrine of Amarnath; At Srinagar on the Return Journey; The Camp under the Chennaars.

THE VALE OF KASHMIR

The legend is that the Vale of Kashmir was once a lake, and that at this point the Divine Bear pierced the mountains with his tusks, and let the Jhellum go free. Another piece of geography in the form of myth. Or is it also prehistoric history?

It is said that the Lord Himself is the weight on the side of the fortunate! cried the Swami in high glee, returning to our room at the dak bungalow, and sitting down, with his umbrella on his knees. As he had brought no companaion, he had himself to perform all the ordinary little masculine offices, and he had gone out to hire *dongas*, and do what was necessary. But he had immediately fallen in with a man, who, on hearing his name, had undertaken the whole business, and sent him back, free of responsibility.

So we enjoyed the day. We drank Kashmiri tea out of a *Samovar* and ate the jam of the country, and at about four o' clock we entered into possession of a flotilla of *dongas*, three in number on which presently we set forth for Srinagar. The first evening, however we were moored by the garden of the Swami's friend, and there we played with the children, and gathered forget-me-nots, and watched a circle of peasants, singing, at some harvest-game in the freshly-cut cornfields. The Swami, returning to his boat about eleven, could still as he passed us in the dark, hear the end of our warm discussion about the effect of the introduction of money on rural peoples.

We found ourselves, next day, in the midst of a beautiful valley, ringed round with snow-mountains. This

is known as the Vale of Kashmir, but it might be more accurately described, perhaps, as the Vale of Srinagar. The city of Islamabad had its own valley, higher up the river, and to reach it we had to wind in and out amongst the mountains. The sky above was of the bluest of the blue, and the water-road along which we travelled, was also, perforce, blue. Sometimes our way lay through great green triangles of lotus-leaves, with a rosy flower or two, and on each side stretched the field, in some of which, as we came, they were reaping. The whole was a symphony in blue and green and white, so exquisitely pure and vivid that for a while the response of the soul to its beauty was almost pain!

That first morning, taking a long walk across the fields, we came upon an immense chennaar tree, standing in the midst of a wide pasture. It really looked as if the passage through it might shelter the proverbial twenty cows! The Swami fell to architectural visions of how it might be fitted up as a dwelling-place for a hermit. A small cottage might in fact have been built in the hollow of this living tree. And then he talked of meditation, in a way to consecrate every chennaar we should ever see.

We turned, with him, into the neighbouring farm-yard. There we found, seated under a tree, a singularly handsome elderly woman. She wore the crimson coronet and white veil of the Kashmir wife, and sat spinning wool, while round her, helping her, were her two daughters-in-law and their children. The Swami had called at this farm once before, in the previous autumn, and often spoken, since, of the faith and pride of this very woman. He had begged for water, which she had at once given him. Then, before going, he had asked her quietly, "And what, Mother, is your religion?" "I thank God, Sir!" had rung out the old voice, in pride and triumph, "by the mercy of the Lord, I am a Mussalman!"

The whole family received him now, as an old friend, and were ready to show every courtesy to the friends he had brought.

The journey to Srinagar took two to three days, and one evening, as we walked in the fields before supper, one who had seen the Kalighat, complained to the Master of the abandonment of feeling there, which had jarred on her. "Why do they kiss the ground before the image?" she exclaimed. The Swami had been pointing to the crop of *til*,—which he thought to have been the original of the English dill,—and calling it "the oldest oil-bearing seed of the Aryans." But at this question, he dropped the little blue flower from his hands, and a great hush came over his voice, as he stood still and said: "Is it not the same thing to kiss the ground before that image, as to kiss the ground before these mountains?"

Our Master had promised that before the end of the summer he would take us into retreat, and teach us to meditate. We had now to go to Srinagar for a long-accumulating mail, and the question rose as to the arrangement of the holiday. It was decided that we should first see the country, and afterwards make the retreat.

The first evening in Srinagar we dined out, with some Begali officials and in the course of conversation, one of the Western guests, maintained that the history of every nation illustrated and evolved certain ideals, to which the people of that nation should hold themselves true. It was very curious to see how the Hindus present objected to this. To them it was clearly a bondage, to which the mind of man could not permanently submit itself. Indeed, in their revolt against the fetters of the doctrine, they appeared to be unable to do justice to the idea itself. At last the Swami intervened. "I think you must admit," he said, "that the ultimate unit is psychological. This is much more permanent than geographical."

And then he spoke of cases known to us all, of one of whom he always thought as the most typical "Christian" he has ever seen, yet she was a Bengali woman, and of another, born in the West, who was 'a better Hindu than himself.' And was not this, after all, the ideal state of things, that each should be born in the other's country to spread the given ideal as far as it could be carried?

LIFE AT SRINAGAR

In the mornings, we still had long talks, as before—sometimes it would be the different religious periods through which Kashmir had passed, or the morality of Buddhism, or the history of Siva-worship, or perhaps the position of Srinagar under Kashmir.

Once he was talking with one of us about Buddhism, and he suddenly said, "the fact is Buddhism tried to do, in the time of Asoka, what the world never was ready for till now!" He referred to the federalisation of religions. It was a wonderful picture, this, of the religious imperialism of Asoka, broken down, time and again, by successive waves of Christianity and Mahommedanism, each claiming exclusive rights over the conscience of mankind, and finally to seem to have a possibility, within measurable distance of time, today!

Another time, the talk was of Chengis Khan, the conqueror from Central Asia. "You hear people talk of him as a vulgar aggressor," he cried passionately, "but that is not true! They are never greedy or vulgar, these great souls! He was inspired with the thought of unity, and he wanted to unify his world. Yes, Napoleon was cast in the same mould. And another, Alexander. Only those three, or perhaps one soul, manifesting itself in

three different conquests!" And then he passed on to speak of that one soul whom he believed to have come, again and again in religion, charged with the divine impulse to bring about the unity of man in God.

At this time (July, 1898), the transfer of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, from Madras to the newly established Ashrama at Mayavati was much in all our thoughts. The Swami had always had a special love for this paper, as the beautiful name he had given it indicated. He had always been eager, too, for the establishment of organs of his own. The value of the journal in the education of modern India, was perfectly evident to him, and he felt that his Master's message and mode of thought required to be spread by this means, as well as by preaching and by work. Day after day, therefore he would dream about the future of his papers, as about the work in its various centres. Day after day he would talk of the forthcoming first number, under the new editorship of Swami Swarupananda. And one afternoon he brought to us, as we sat together, a paper on which, he said, he had "tried to write a letter, but it would come this way!"—

To the Awakened India

Once more awake!

For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life
Anew, and rest to lotus-eyes, for visions
Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth!
No death for thee!

Resume thy march,

With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest, even of the road-side dust
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold and free. Awakener, ever
Forward! Speak thy stirring words

The Master was longing to leave us all, and go away into some place of quiet, alone. But we not knowing this, insisted on accompanying him to the Coloured Springs, called "Kshir Bhavani", or Milk of the Mother. It was said to be the first time that Christian or Mahommedan had ever landed there, and we can never be thankful enough for the glimpse we had of it, since afterwards it was to become the most sacred of all names to us. An amusing incident was that our Mussalman boat-men would not allow us to land with shoes on; so thoroughly Hinduistic is the Mahommedanism of Kashmir, with its forty *rishis*, and pilgrimages made fasting, to their shrines.

Another day we went off quietly by ourselves, and visited the Takt-i-Suleiman, a little temple very massively built, on the summit of a small mountain two or three thousand feet high. It was peaceful and beautiful, and the famous floating garden could be seen below us, for miles around. The Takt-i-Suleiman was one of the great illustrations of the Swami's argument, when he would take up the subject of the Hindu love of nature as shown in the choice of sites for temples and architectural monuments. As he had declared, in London, that the saints lived on the hill-tops, in order to enjoy the scenery, so now he pointed out,—citing one example after another,—that our Indian people always consecrated places of peculiar beauty and importance, by making there altars of worship. And there was no denying that the little Takt, crowning the hill that dominated the whole valley, was a case in point.

Speaking of Thomas á Kempis one day, and of how he himself used to wander as a sannyasin, with the *Imitation* as his whole library, one word, he said, came back to him, inseparably associated with the name of Western monk.

"Silence! ye teachers of the world, and silence!
ye prophets! Speak thou alone, O Lord,
unto my soul!"

Every now and then there would be long talks about the Gita, "that wonderful poem, without one note in it, of weakness or unmanliness." He said one day that it was absurd to complain that knowledge was not given to women or sudras. For the whole gist of the Upānishads was contained in the Gita. Without it, indeed, they could hardly be understood; and all castes could read the Mahabharata.

"These shadows of home and marriage cross even my mind now and then!" he cried one morning, with that tender desire to make himself one with the sinner that he so often showed. But it was across oceans of scorns for those who would glorify the householder, that he sought, on this occasion, to preach the religious life. "Is it so easy," he exclaimed, "to be Janaka? To sit on a throne absolutely unattached? Caring nothing for wealth or fame, for wife or child? One after another in west has told me that he had reached this. But I could only say—'such great men are not born in India!' And then he turned to the other side. "Never forget." he said to one of his hearers, "to say to yourself, and to teach your children, as is the difference between a fire-fly and the blazing sun, between the infinite ocean and a little pond, between a mustard seed and the mountain of Meru, such is the difference between the householder and the Sannyasin! Everything is fraught with fear: Renunciation alone is fearless. Let us never, never, forget our ideal.

At such moments, he would identify himself entirely with the thought he sought to demonstrate, and in the same sense in which a law of nature might be deemed cruel or arrogant, his exposition might have those

qualities. Sitting and listening, we felt ourselves brought face to face with the invisible and the absolute.

All this was on our return to Srinagar. We visited the Dahl Lake. There we had seen the Shalimar Bagh of Nur Mahal, and the Nishat Bagh, or Garden of gladness, and had spent the hour of sunset quietly, amongst the green of the irises, at the foot of giant chennaar trees.

THE SHRINE OF AMARNATH

On Tuesday, August the 2nd, the great day of Amarnath, the first batch of pilgrims must have left the camp at two! We left by the light of the full moon. The sun rose as we went down the narrow valley. It was not too safe, at this part of the journey. But when we left our *dandies* and began to climb, the real danger began. A sort of goat-path in almost vertical hill-sides, becoming in the descent on the other side, a tiny staircase on the turf. Every here and there, delicate columbines, daisies. and wild roses, tempted one to risk life and limb in their acquisition. Then having at last reached the bottom of the farther slope, we had to toil along the glacier, mile after mile, to the Cave. About a mile before our destination, the ice ceased, and in the flowing water the pilgrims had to bathe. Even when we seemed to have arrived, there was still quite a stiff ascent over the rocks to be made.

The Swami, exhausted, had by this time, fallen behind, but I, not remembering that he might be ill, waited, below the banks of gravel for his appearance. He bathed. Half an hour later he entered the cave. With a smile he knelt, first at one end of the semi-circle, then at

the other. The place was vast, large enough to hold a cathedral, and the great ice-Siva, in a niche of deepest shadow, seemed as if throned on its own base. A few minutes passed, and then he returned to leave the cave.

To him, the heaven had opened. He had touched the feet of Siva. He had had to hold himself tight, he said afterwards, lest he should swoon away. But so great was his physical exhaustion, that a doctor said afterwards that his heart ought have stopped beating, and had undergone a permanent enlargement instead. How strangely near fulfilment had been those words of his Master, "When Naren realises who and what he will give up this body!"

"I have enjoyed it so much!" he said half an hour afterwards, as he sat on a rock above the stream-side, eating lunch with the kind naked Swami and myself. "I thought the ice-Lingam was Siva Himself...It was all worship. I never enjoyed any religious place so much!" Afterwards he would often tell of the overwhelming vision that had seemed to draw him almost into its vertex. He always said too that the grace of Amarnath had been granted to him, not to die till he himself should give consent. And to me he said, "You do not now understand. But you have made the pilgrimage, and it will go on working. Causes must bring their effects. You will understand better afterwards. The effects will come."

MYTHS OF THE HINDUS AND THE BUDDHISTS

This is an unfinished work of Sister Nivedita. The plan of this book first came to her mind when she visited Ajanta and it was there that Nivedita requested Nandalal Bose to make some illustrations for the proposed book. She however could not complete the book due to her premature death and subsequently the book was com-

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pleted by Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. The book was first published in 1916 from London by Messrs George G. Harrap & Company. The book contains 32 illustrations in colour by eminent Indian artists under the supervision of Abanindranath Tagore.

In the preface of the book, Dr. Coomaraswamy writes: "Sister Nivedita, to whom the present work was first entrusted, needs no introduction to Western or Indian readers. A most sincere disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who was himself a follower of the great Ramakrishna, she brought to the study of Indian life and literature a sound knowledge of Western educational and social science, and an unsurpassed enthusiasm of devotion to the peoples and ideals of her adopted country. Sister Nivedita's untimely death in 1911, has made it necessary that the present work should be completed by another hand. The following parts of the text as here printed are due to Sister Nivedita: *Mythology of the Indo-Aryan Races* (pp. 1-5); pp. 14-22 of the introduction to the Ramayana; the whole of the Mahabharata (except pp. 186-190); part of the section on Shiva (pp. 291-295); the comment of Kacha and Devyani (pp. 339-342); and the story of Dhruva, Shani, etc (pp. 378-388). The present writer is responsible for all else—rather more than two-thirds of the whole.

"The illustrations are reproduced from water-colour drawings executed specially for this book by Indian artists (Nandalal Bose, K. Venkatappa, Suren Kar, Khitindra N. Mazumdar, Asit Kumar Haldar) under the supervision of Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore, C.I.E., Vice-Principal of the Calcutta School of Art, who has himself contributed some of the pictures."

We quote here the first article of the book.

MYTHOLOGY OF THE INDO-ARYAN RACES

In the early history of man Asia formed a vast breeding ground of civilisation of which countries like Egypt, Arabia, Greece, India, and China were the extremities. Egypt and Arabia were destined later, from their geographical positions, to be overrun and suffer destruc-

tion of their culture. Greece and pre-eminently India formed what may be called *cults-de-sac*. Here, as if up the long shores of some hidden creek, would be forced with the tidal wave of one epoch after another, each leaving on the coast a tide-mark that perhaps none of its successors would be able entirely to cover. Hence, in India, we may hope to discover means of studying, as nowhere else in the world, the succession of epochs in culture.

Civilisation develops by new conjunctions of tribes and races, each with its individual outlook, the result of that distinctive body of custom which has imposed itself upon them through the geographical conditions of whatever region formed their cradle-land and school. Western Asia is one of the central areas of the world. Here by the very necessities of the configuration the great high-ways from North to South and East to West meet, the mercantile cities—points of barter and exchange—will grow up at the crossways. Equally obvious is it that India and the remote parts of the Nile Valley will form seats of occupation and production. Here race upon race will settle and combine. Here agricultural nations will grow up. Here civilisation will accumulate. And here we may look to see the gradual elaboration of schemes of thought which will not only bear their own history stamped upon them, but will in their turn become causes and sources of dynamic influence upon the world outside. It is not possible to recover the story of the ideas which the Nile people have contributed to the world as we know it. But those people themselves, so we are informed, have irretrievably relaxed their hold upon their own past. Between them and it there is only broken continuity, a lapse of time that represents no process of cause and effect, but rather a perpetual interruption of such a series; for a single generation enamoured of foreign ways is almost enough in history to risk the whole continuity

of civilisation learning. Ages of accumulation are entrusted to the frail bark of each passing epoch by the hand of the past, desiring to make over its treasures to the use of the future. It takes a certain stubbornness, a doggedness of loyalty, even a modicum of unreasonable conservatism may be, to lose nothing in the long march of the ages; and even when confronted with great empires, with a sudden extension of the idea of culture, or with the supreme temptation of a new religion, to hold fast what we have, adding to it only as much as we can healthfully and manfully carry.

Yet this attitude is the criterion of a strong national genius, and in India, since the beginning of her history, it has been steadily maintained. Never averse to a new idea, no matter what its origin, India has never failed to put each on its trial. Avid of new thought, but jealously reluctant to accept new custom or to essay new expression, she has been slowly constructive, unfaltering synthetic, from the earliest days to the present time.

The fault of Indian conservatism, indeed, has been its tendency to perpetuate differences without assimilation. There has always been room for a stronger race, with its own equipment of custom and ideals, to settle down in the interstices of the Brahmanical civilisation, uninfluenced and uninfluencing. To this day Calcutta and Bombay have their various quarters—Chinese, Burmese, and what not—not one of which contributes to, or receives from, the civic life in the midst of which it is set. To this day the Baniya of India is the Phoenix or Phoenician, perhaps of an older world. But this unmixingness has not been uniform. The personality of Buddha was the source of an impulse of religion to China and half a dozen minor nations. The Gupta empire represents an epoch in which foreign guests and foreign cultures were as highly welcomed and appreciated in India as

today in Europe and America. And finally only the rise of Islam was effective in ending these long ages of intercourse which have left their traces in the faith and thought of the Indian people.

Hinduism is, in fact, an immense synthesis, deriving its elements from a hundred different directions, and incorporating every conceivable motive of religion. The motives of religion are manifold. Earth-worship, sun-worship, nature-worship, sky-worship, honour paid to heroes and ancestors, mother-worship, father-worship, prayers for the dead, the mystic association of certain plants and animals: all these and more are included within Hinduism. And each marks some single age of the past, with its characteristic conjunction or invasion of races formerly alien to one another. They are all welded together now to form a great whole. But still by visits to outlying shrines, by the study of the literature of certain definite periods, and by careful following of the special threads, it is possible to determine what were some of the influences that have entered into its making.

Now and again in history a great systematising impulse has striven to cast all or part of recognised belief into the form of an organic whole. Such attempts have been made with more or less success in the compilation of books known as the *Puranas*, in the epic poem called the *Ramayana*, and the most perfectly of all, in the *Mahabharata*. Each of these takes some ancient form which has been perhaps for centuries transmitted by memory, and sets it down in writing, modifying it and adding to it in such ways as bring it, in the author's eyes, up to date.

The *Mahabharata* is the result of the greatest of the efforts thus made to conserve in a collected form all the ancient beliefs and traditions of the race. The name

Mahabharata itself shows that the movement which culminated in the compilation of this great work had behind it a vivid consciousness of the unity of the Bharata or Indian people. For this reason one finds in this work a great effort made to present a complete embodiment of the ideals to be found in the social organism, religion, ancient history, mythology and ethics of the Indian people.

Hence if we want to follow Indian mythology from its dim beginnings to its perfect maturity through all its multiform intermediate phases we cannot have a better guide than the Mahabharata. For in India mythology is not a mere subject of antiquarian research and disquisition; here it still permeates the whole life of the people as a controlling influence. And it is the living mythology which, passing through the stages of representation of successive cosmic process and assuming definite shape thereafter, has become a powerful factor in the everyday life of the people—it is this living mythology that has found place in the Mahabharata.

It should be understood that it is the mythology which has left its clearest impress in the Mahabharata that has attained a fully developed form, and exercised a potent influence on Indian society. Other myths have for a time appeared in a vague nebular form and then vanished like smoke, leaving little trace behind; they have not assumed any concrete forms in the memory of the race. Thus it is that we find a popular saying prevalent in Bengal that "whatever is not in the Mahabharata is not to be found in the land of Bharata (India)." In the Mahabharata we find on the one hand the primal forms of mythology, and on the other its fully developed forms also. We find in this creation of the Indian mind a complete revelation of that mind.

In the infancy of the human mind men used to mix up their own fancies and feelings with the ways of the birds and beast, the various phenomena of land and water, and the movements of sun and moon and stars and planets, and viewed the whole universe in this humanified form. In later times, when men had attained the greatest importance in the eyes of man, the glory of stellar worlds paled before human greatness.

MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS

Sister Nivedita, as we have already seen, was a writer of rare and winning eloquence and her ability to write quickly surprised many of her colleagues. We have discussed about her major works, but innumerable articles still lie scattered in the pages of various journals. These articles yet remain to be collected and published in a book form. Here we give a selection of five such articles which first appeared in the *Indian Review*, *Indian World*, *Hindu* and *Modern Review*.

The first of these five articles constitute Sister Nivedita's undelivered speech which she prepared for and sent to the First Universal Races Congress held at Paris in 1911. The Sister was then in America when invitation went to her to attend the Congress as a delegate from India. Nivedita, however, could not attend the Congress for reasons of her health, but she sent a paper there entitled *The Present Position of Woman* from which we give below certain extracts.

I

THE PRESENT POSITION OF WOMAN

It would be useless to attempt any comparative study of human institutions, apart from the ideals of which they are the expression. In every social evolution, whether of the modern American, the Hottentot, the Semitic or the Mongolian, the dynamic element lies in the ideal behind it. For the student of sociology, the inability to discover this formative factor in any given result constitutes a supreme defect. To assume, as is so often done, that one people has moulded itself on a moral purpose, clearly perceived, while in the minds of others the place for such purpose, is blank, and they are as they have happened to occur, is purely anarchic and prescientific. Yet some such conception is only too common amongst those writers to whom we are compelled to go, for the data of racial sociology. This is an unfortunate consequence of the fact that, for the most part, we are only impelled to the international service of humanity, by a strong accession of sectarian ardour.

Another error, to be avoided in a comparative statement, is that of endowing the more or less antithetic ideals and tendencies which we do disentangle, with a false rigidity and distinctiveness. It is easy to argue backwards, from institutions to ideals, in such a way as to tabulate whose realms of poetry and aspiration inexorably closed to certain peoples. But ideals are the opportunity of all, the property of none; and sanity of view seems to demand that we should never lose sight of the underlying unity and *humanness* of humanity.

And lastly, we have to remember the widely differing values of different classes of evidence. It is important always, if possible, to make a people speak for themselves. Identical material may be oppositely handled, as all will admit, by different persons, but we cannot go far wrong in demanding that in all cases original evidence shall have a wide preference, over the report of his personal observations and opinions, made by a foreigner. It would also be well to stipulate for the same rights of scrutiny, over even original evidence, as would be exercised by competent persons in weighing testimony, with regard, say, to physical experiments or a case in a court of law.All that we have a right to ask is, whether it has also the opposite possibility, and in what degree and frequency. I assume that we are all familiar with the relation between the general development of society, and its impulse to recognise an individual poet, and accord him fame. Bearing this relation in mind, we shall be able measure the significance of the following lines taken from a poem by the Chinese poet Lin-Tchi (translated by Martin and published by Sandoz & Frischbacher, 1876):

“We are living under the same roof, dear comrade
of my life.

We shall be buried in a single tomb,
And our comingled ashes will eternalise our union.
With what good will hast thou shared my poverty,
And striven to aid me by thy toil!

What ought I not to do to make our names
illustrious by my wisdom,

Thus rendering glorious thy noble example and thy
good deeds!

But my tenderness and my respect have told thee
this every day.”

Is it not true that one genuine utterance from the heart of a people, is testimony that outweighs a whole volume of opinions, however honest, about them? The historical process, as manifested in different countries, may have led to the selection of various ideals as motives of organisation, but an open examination of data will make us very doubtful of statements that would deny to any nationality a given height of spirituality or refinement.

The first point to be determined in dealing with the proper subject of this paper, the present position of the civilised woman, is the principle of classification to be followed. We might divide women into Asiatic and European. The terms Eastern and Western are too vague, and Modern and Mediaeval too inexact.....Perhaps the only true classification is based on ideals, and if so, we might divide human society, in so far as woman is concerned, into communities dominating by the civic, and communities dominated by the family ideal. Under the civic ideal—imperfectly as particular women may feel that this has yet been realised—both men and women tend to be recognised as individuals, holding definite relations to each other in the public economy, and by their own free will cooperating to build up the family... ..Regarding the civic evolution of woman as a process, it is easy to see that it will always take place most rapidly in those communities and at those epochs when political or industrial transformation, or both, are most energetic and individuating. The guiding and restraining influences which give final shape to the results achieved are always derived from the historical fund of ideals and institutions, social, aesthetic and spiritual.

* * * *

The civic life, then, is that which pertains to the community as a whole, that community—whether of nation, province, or township—whose unity transcends

and ignores that of the family, reckoning its own active elements, men or women as the case may be, as individuals only. Of this type of social organisation, public spirit is the distinctive virtue; determined invasion of the freedom of welfare of the whole, in the interest of special classes or individuals, the distinctive sin. The civic spirit embodies the personal and categorical form of such ideals as those of national unity, or corporate independence. Its creative bond is that of place, the common home,—as distinguished from blood, the common kin,—the common home, whose children are knit together to make the *civitas*, the civic family, rising in its largest complexity to be the national family.

The characteristic test of moral dignity and maturity which our age offers to the individual is this of his or her participation in civic wisdom and responsibility...Different countries have their various difficulties in civic evolution, and these are apt to bear harder on that of the woman than of the man.

* * * *

The society of the East, and therefore necessarily its womenhood, has moulded itself from time immemorial on the central ideal of the family.The East continues to regard the Family as woman's proper and characteristic sphere. The family as the social unity determines its conception of the whole of society. Community of blood and origin, knitting the kinship into one, becomes all-important to its, as the bond of unity. The whole tends to be conceived of in Eastern countries, as the social are within which marriage can take place. That combination of conceptions of race and class which thus comes into prominence, constitutes caste, rising in its multiplicity into the *ecclesia* or *samaj*. Throughout the art of Eastern peoples we can see how important and easily discriminated by them, is the difference between mean and noble

race. The same fact comes out, even in their scientific interests, where questions of ethnology have always tended to supplant history proper.As a compensating factor to the notion of birth, the East has the more truly civic idea of the village community, a natural norm for the thought of nationality.

* * * *

In India the perpetuation of the family is regarded as the paramount duty of the individual to the commonwealth. There is a desire for male posterity, made universal by a rule that only a son can offer the sacraments of the dead to the spirits of his forefathers. But the practice of adoption is very frequent, and the intervention of a priestly class, in the form of domestic chaplains, makes this element somewhat less central to the Hindu system than to the Chinese, amongst whom the father is also the celebrant. As throughout Asia, the family is undivided, and in the vast households of this type, domestic matters are entirely in the governance of women.....Anything more beautiful than the life of the Indian home, as created and directed by Indian women, it would be difficult to conceive. But if there is one relation, or one position, on which above all others the idealising energy of the people spends itself, it is that of the wife. Here, according to Hindu ideas, is the very pivot of society and poetry. Marriage, in Hinduism, is a sacrament, and indissoluble. And all the dreams of the Indian people centre in the thought of heroic purity and faith in wifeness.

* * * *

India, it should be understood, is the headwater of Asiatic thought and idealism. In other countries we may meet with applications, here we find the idea itself. In India, the sanctity and sweetness of family life have been raised to the rank of a great culture. Wifeness is a

religion; motherhood a dream of perfection; and the pride and protectiveness of man are developed to a very high degree. "We are born once," said an Indian to me, with great haughtiness, "we die once, and likewise we are married once!" Whatever new developments may now lie before the womanhood of the East, it is ours to hope that they will constitute only a pouring of the molten metal of her old faithfulness and consecration, into the new moulds of a wider knowledge and extended social formation.

II

THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT

It is necessary to say, and I feel that it cannot be said too strongly, that in the Swadeshi movement the Indian people have found an opportunity to make themselves respected by the whole world. For the world respects that which shows that it is to be feared, and the one thing that is feared, by all is strong, intelligent, and united action. We conquer a single elephant with ease. But where is the man who would attack a herd? The note of manliness, and self-help is sounded throughout the Swadeshi movement. There is here no begging for help, no cringing for concessions. What India can do for herself, that she will do. What she cannot at present do for herself will be considered hereafter.

To go deeper, it is the duty of the Indian people to refuse to the very utmost of their power to participate in that conspiracy of modern trade by which their own people are being impoverished in an accumulating ratio. Political exigencies do not create this duty. But political exigencies make it possible to bring it home to consciences

that would otherwise have been difficult to touch, and by the force of common effort, to put new hope and enthusiasm into even the oldest workers. And there is no reason why the movement should fail in India.....The whole history of India fits the Indian people for a struggle in which there is no force to uphold the *Dharma* against the temptations of self-indulgence, of comfort, and of individual selfishness save that of the human will and the human conscience. It may be that no other modern country could succeed in this ordeal. Yet, that would not condemn the holy land to fail. The Indian people have heard, so far, of nothing but their weaknesses. The time has now come when they should meditate on their own strength, and proceed to prove it. What about the wealth of self-control and self-direction, handed down by generations of austere and clean-living ancestors, and put out to interest in the steady routine of Hindu piety, day after day, and year after year?

Again, if it were true that man always took the essiest course, what society could ever hope to rise out of savagery? All our higher instincts, like cleanliness, refinement, love of learning, have been built up of refusals to go to the easy way, to take the cheaper of two results. Rather, is it true to say, that man is man, in virtue of his inherent power to curb his grosser appetite and will, in favour of some finer and more remote purpose. Man is man in proportion only as he does not live the blind instinctive life of his first impulse, his immediate convenience, his individual self-interest, but a higher life of struggle against these primitive desires and their suppression by others which are subtler, less self-regarding, and further reaching. It is precisely in a matter like the keeping of the Swadeshi vow that the Indian people, especially, can find an opportunity to show their true mettle. Their civilisation looks meagre enough and poor

enough, beside the luxury and complexity of the West. But if it, with all its bareness, should prove to contain unsuspected moral potentialities, if it should hide a power, unknown to others, of choosing right at any cost, than which will force the acknowledgement of its superiority, the magnificence of Europe, or the poverty of the mother land?

I have spoken of this as a struggle on behalf of *Dharma*. But is this true? Is the Swadeshi movement actually an integral part of the National Righteousness? The Mother-Church at least, has spoken with no uncertain voice. Like a trumpet-call has gone forth the renewal of vows at the Kalighat, in Calcutta. Henceforth it will be held sacrilege to offer foreign wares in worship. Of Calcutta it may be said that in all directions small industries have sprung up like flowers amongst us. Here are whole households engaged in making matches. Somewhere else, it is ink, tooth-powder, soap, note-paper, or what not? There again, is a scheme for pottery, or glass, on a more ambitious scale. And this, without mentioning the very staple of the country, its cotton weaving. Where before were only despair and starvation, we see today glad faces, and feel an atmosphere of hope.

Now what does all this mean? Could there be anything more pathetic than the joy of a confessedly criminal class at the cessation of a need for crime?.....Oh voice of the Indian people, voice of the down-trodden, voice of the ignorant and helpless, speak louder yet, that we, your own flesh, may hear your cry, and know your innocent gladness, and join our hands and hearts with yours, in a common suffering and a common love! If it be true that by an attitude of rigid self-control we can help to turn jail-birds into honest men, give to children, who are now forced into dishonesty by the poverty of their homes, an education in labour, and a sufficient

provision for life, bring food to the starving, and hope to the despairing, and finally strengthen the people to withstand the attack of disease, is there any question as to the Swadeshi *tapasya* being *Dharma*? Let none talk nonsense about other lands! On Indian men and women is laid the responsibility of caring for the *Indian* poor. And let there never be forgotten the curse of the *Gita* on the man who does another's duty instead of his own. "Better for a man is his own duty, however badly done, than the duty of another, though that be easy. *The duty of another leads into great peril.* Let Manchester go! Let London go! It is for the Indian people to do *their own* duty.

But let us return to the rewards of this *tapasya*, if successfully carried out. First we must understand that no work was ever wasted. Every vibration of struggle brings its own result. When enough force has gone out, victory is the return. Ultimately, there is no such thing as defeat. A clear will frustrated, only becomes the clearer. Loss becomes then nothing but a gain delayed. Again, victory depends only on effort, never on talk. All, India is watching today the struggle that is going on in Bengal. The air is tense with expectation, with sympathy, with pride, in those grim heroic people and their silent struggle to death, for their Swadeshi trade. Quietly, all India is assimilating their power.

The first result of faithfulness to Swadeshi, is then, the power to be more faithful still. The second result is much more tangible. The movement today is only in its initial stage. It cannot be allowed to end till it has stopped the whole of the commercial drain on the country. Now if the impoverishment of India is a matter of the amount of an annual drain put out at compound interest, which it is, it follows that the amount saved by the Swadeshi movement, so long as the level gained

is maintained, is turned into prosperity at compound interest. ...The Swadeshi movement has come to stay, and to grow, and to drive back for ever in modern India, the tides of reaction and despair.

III

THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S LIFE AND WORK

Of the bodily presence of him who was known to the world as Vivekananda, all that remains today is a bowl of ashes. The light that has burned in seclusion during the last five years by our river-side, has gone out now. The great voice that rang out across the nations is hushed in death. Life came often to this mighty soul as storm and pain. But the end was peace. Silently, at the close of evensong, on a dark night of Kali, came the benediction of death. The weary and tortured body was laid down gently and the triumphant spirit was restored to the eternal Samadhi.

He passed, when the laurels of his first achievements were yet green. He passed, when new and greater calls were ringing in his ears. Quietly, in the beautiful home of his illness, the intervening years with some few breaks, went by amongst plants and animals, unostentatiously training the disciples who gathered round him, silently ignoring the great fame that had shone upon his name. Man-making was his own stern brief summary of the work that was worth doing. And laboriously, unflaggingly, day after day, he set himself to man-making, playing the part of Guru, of father, even of schoolmaster, by turns. The very afternoon of the day he left us, had

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he not spent three hours in giving a Sanskrit lesson on the Vedas?

External success and leadership were nothing to such a man. During his years in the West, he made rich and powerful friends, who would have gladly retained him in their midst. But for him, the Occident, with all its luxuries, had no charms. To him, the garb of a beggar, the lanes of Calcutta, and the disabilities of his own people, were more dear than all the glory of the foreigner, and detaining hands had to loose their hold of one who passed ever onward toward the East.

What was that the West heard in him, leading so many to hail and cherish his name as that of one of the greatest religious teachers of the world? He made no personal claim. He told no personal story. One whom he knew and trusted long had never heard that he held any position of distinction amongst his Gurubhais. He made no attempt to popularise with strangers any single form of creed, whether of God or Guru. Rather, through him the mighty torrent of Hinduism poured forth its cooling waters upon the intellectual and spiritual worlds, fresh from its secret sources in Himalayan snows. A witness to the vast religious culture of Indian homes and holy men he could never cease to be. Yet he quoted nothing but the Upanishadas. He taught nothing but the Vedanta. And men trembled, for they heard the voice for the first time of the religious teacher who feared not Truth.

To his disciples, Vivekananda will ever remain as the arch-type of the Sannyasin. Burning renunciation was chief of all the inspirations that spoke to us through him. "Let me die a true Sannyasin as my Master did," he exclaimed once, passionately, "heedless of money, of women, and of fame! And of these the most insidious is the love of fame!" Yet the self-same destiny that filled him with this burning thirst of intense *vairagya*m

embodied in him also the ideal householder—full of the yearning to protect and save, eager to learn and teach the use of materials, reaching out towards the reorganisation and re-ordering of life.

Vivekananda was at once a sublime expression of superconscious religion and one of the greatest patriots ever born. He lived at a moment of national disintegration, and he was fearless of the new. He lived when men were abandoning their inheritance, and he was an ardent worshipper of the old. In him the national destiny fulfilled itself, that a new wave of consciousness should be inaugurated always in the leaders of the Faith. In such a man it may be that we possess the whole Veda of the future. We must remember however, that the moment has not come for gauging the religious significance of Vivekananda. Religion is living seed, and his sowing is but over. The time of his harvest is not yet.

But death actually gives the Patriot to his country. When the master has passed away from he midst of his disciples, when the murmurs of his critics are all hushed at the burning-ghat, then the great voice that spoke of freedom rings out unchallenged and whole nations answer as one man. Here was a mind that had had unique opportunities of observing the people of many countries intimately. East and West he had seen and been received by the high and low alike. His brilliant intellect had never failed to gauge what it saw. "America will solve the problems of the Sudra; but through what awful turmoil!" he said many times. On a second visit, however, he felt tempted to change his mind, seeing the greed of wealth and the lust of oppression in the West, and comparing these with the calm dignity and ethical stability of the old Asiatic solutions formulated by China many centuries ago. His great acumen was yoked to a marvellous humanity. Never had we dreamt of such a gospel of hope

for the Negro as that with which he rounded on an American gentleman who spoke of the African races with contempt. And when, in the Southern States he was occasionally taken for "a coloured man," and turned away from some door as such (a mistake that was always atoned for as soon as discovered by the lavish hospitality of the most responsible family of the place), he was never known to deny the imputation. "Would it not have been refusing my brother?" he said simply when he was asked the reason of this silence.

To him each race had its own greatness and shone in the light of that central quality. There was no Europe without the Turk, no Egypt without the development of the people of the soil. England had grasped the secret of obedience with self-respect. To speak of any patriotism in the same breath with Japan's was sacrilege.

What then was the prophecy that Vivekananda left to his own people? With what national significance has he filled that gerrua mantle that he dropped behind him in his passing? Is it for us perhaps to lift the yellow rags upon our flagpole, and carry them forward as our banner? Assuredly. For he was a man who never dreamt of failure. Here was a man who spoke of naught but strength. Supremely free from sentimentality, supremely defiant of all authority (are not missionary slanders still ringing in our ears? Are not some of them to be accepted with fresh accessions of pride?) he refused to meet any foreigner save as the master. "The Swami's great genius lies in his dignity," said an Englishman who knew him well, "it is nothing short of royal!" He has grasped the great fact that the East must come to the West, not as a sycophant, not as a servant, but as Guru and teacher, and never did he lower the flag of his personal ascendancy. "Let Europeans lead us in Religion," he would say, with a scorn too deep to be anything but merry. "I have never

spoken of revenge," he said once. "I have always spoken of strength. Do we dream of revenging ourselves on this drop of seaspray? But it is great thing to a mosquito!"

To him, nothing Indian required apology. Did anything seem, to the pseudo-refinement of the alien, barbarous or crude? Without denying, without minimising anything, his colossal energy was immediately concentrated on the vindication of that particular point, and the unfortunate critic was tossed backwards and forwards on the horns of his own argument. One such instance occurred when an Englishman on boardship asked him some sneering question about the Puranas, and never can any who were present forget how he was pulverised, by a reply that made the Hindu Puranas, compare favourably with the Christian Gospels, but planted the Vedas and Upanishadas high up beyond the reach of any rival. There was no friend that he would not sacrifice without mercy at such a moment in the name of National Defence. Such an attitude was not, perhaps, always reasonable. It was often indeed frankly unpleasant. But it was superb in the manliness that even enemies must admire. To Vivekananda, again, everything Indian was absolutely and equally sacred,—“This land to which must come all souls wending their way Godward!” his religious consciousness tenderly phrased it.

He was himself the exponent of Hinduism at Chicago, but finding another Indian religionist struggling with the difficulty of presenting his case, he sat down and wrote his speech for him, making a better story for his friend's faith than his own adherent could have done!

He took infinite pains to teach European disciples to eat with their fingers, and perform the ordinary simple acts of Hindu life. “Remember, if you love India at all, you must love her as she is, not as you might wish her to become” he used to say. And it was this great firm-

ness of his, standing like a rock for what actually was, that did more than any other single fact, perhaps, to open the eyes of those aliens who loved him to the beauty and strength of that ancient poem, the common life of the common Indian people. For his own part, he was too free from the desire for approbation to make a single concession to new-fangled ways. The best of every land had been offered him, but it left him still the simple Hindu of the old style, too proud of his simplicity to find any need of change. "After Ramakrishna, I follow Vidyasagar!" he exclaimed, only two days before his death, and out came the oft-repeated story of the wooden sandals coming pitter patter with the chudder and dhoti, into the Viceregal Council Chamber, and the Viceroy was surprised to hear the old Pundit remonstrating him: "But if you didn't want me, why did you ask me to come?"

Such points, however, are only interesting as personal characteristics. Of a deeper importance is the question as to the conviction that spoke through them. What was this? Whether did it tend? His whole life was a search for the common basis of Hinduism. To his sound judgment the idea that two pice postage, cheap travel, and a common language of affairs could create a national unity, was obviously childish and superficial. These things could only be made to serve old India's turn if she already possessed a deep organic unity of which they might conveniently become an expression. Was such a unity existent or not? For something like eight years he wandered about the land changing his name at every village, learning of every one he met, gaining a vision as accurate and minute as it was profound and general. It was this great quest that overshadowed him with its certainty when, at the Parliament of Religion, he stood before the West and proved that Hinduism converged

upon a single imperative of perfect freedom so completely as to be fully capable of intellectual aggression as any other faith.

It never occurred to him that his own people were in any respect less than the equals of any other nations whatsoever. Being well aware that religion was their national expression, he was also aware that the strength which they might display in that sphere, would be followed before long, by every other conceivable strength.

As a profound student of caste,—his conversation teemed with its unexpected particulars and paradoxes!—he found the key to Indian unity in its exclusiveness. Mahommedans were but a single caste of the nation. Christians another, and so on! It was true that of all these (with the partial exception of the last), non-belief in caste was a caste distinction. But then, the same was true of the Brahmo Samaj and other modern sects of Hinduism. Behind all alike stood the great common facts of one soil; one beautiful old routine of ancestral civilisation; and the overwhelming necessities that must inevitably lead at last to common loves and common hates. But he had learnt, not only the hopes and ideals of every sect and group of the Indian people, but their memories also. A child of the Hindu quarter of Calcutta, returned to live by the Ganges-side, one would have supposed from his enthusiasm that he had been born, now in the Punjab, again in the Himalayas, at a third moment in Rajputana, or elsewhere. The songs of Guru Nanak alternated with those of Meera Bai and Tansen on his lips. Stories of Prithvi Raj and Delhi jostled against those of Chitore and Pratapsingh, Siva and Uma, Radha and Krishna, Sita-Ram and Buddha. Each mighty drama lived in a marvellous actuality, when he was the player. His whole heart and soul was a burning epic of

the country, touched to an overflow of mystic passion by her very name.

Seated in his retreat at Belur, Vivekananda received visits and communications from all quarters. The vast surface might be silent, but deep in the heart of India, the Swami was never forgotten. None could afford, still fewer wished, to ignore him. No hope but was spoken into his ear,—no woe but he knew it and strove to comfort or to rouse. Thus, as always in the case of a religious leader the India that he saw, presented a spectacle strangely unlike that visible to any other eye. For he held in his hands the thread of all that was fundamental, organic and vital; he knew the secret springs of life; he understood with what word to touch the heart of millions. And he had gathered from all this a clear knowledge and certain hope.

Let others blunder as they might. To him the country was young, the Indian vernaculars still unformed, flexible, the national energy unexploited. The India of his dreams was in the future. The new phase of consciousness initiated today through pain and suffering was to be but the first step in a long evolution. To him his country's hope was in herself. Never in the alien. True, his great heart embraced the alien's need, sounding a universal promise to the world. But he never sought for help, or begged assistance. He never leaned on any, what might be done, it was the doer's privilege to do, not the recipient's to accept. He had neither fears nor hopes from without. To reassert that which was India's essential self, and leave the great stream of the national life, strong in a fresh self-confidence and vigour, to find its own way to the ocean, this was the meaning of his sannyas. For his was pre-eminently the sannyas of the greater service. To him, India was Hinduistic, Aryan, Asiatic. Her youth might make their own experiments in

modern luxury. Had they not the right? Would they not return? But the great deeps of her being were moral, austere and spiritual. A people who could embrace death by the Ganges-side were not long to be distracted by the glamour of mere mechanical power.

Buddha had preached renunciation, and in two centuries India had become an Empire. Let her but once more feel the great pulse through all her veins, and no power on earth would stand before her newly awakened energy. Only, it would be in her own life that she would find life, not in imitation; from her own proper past and environment that she would draw inspiration, not from the foreigner. For he who thinks himself weak is weak: he who believes that he is strong is already invincible. And so for his nation, as for every individual, Vivekananda had but one word, one constantly reiterated message:

"Awake! Arise! Struggle on.
And stop not till the
Goal is reached!"

IV

ANANDA MOHAN BOSE THE FIRST CITIZEN OF BENGAL

There is no son or daughter of India who will not take the untimely loss of Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose as an irreparable bereavement. To many it will serve like a personal loss, for he had a gift, far above the common, of giving himself closely and entirely to those who sought his counsel or asked his service. And these were innumerable. Indeed, to some of those who knew him best it may seem as if a less untiring helpfulness, a more

discriminating generosity in giving himself, might have kept him longer in our midst. The fruit was ripe, it is true, but might it not have hung longer on the tree? A full ten years too soon, we have lost one of the noblest sons of the motherland.

Ananda Mohan's public career and its distinctions are known to all of us. They are in all men's mouths and if a measure of his ability is needed, we may find it, in the words of Mr. Fawcett, the blind Postmaster-General of England, who, after having seen Mr. Bose to conduct a political meeting for him, exclaimed: "If that man would only stay in England, he might try to be Prime Minister!" But brilliant as was his mind, the supreme value of his life to his own country lies in the fact that his CHARACTER towered high above it. Gifted with the full Hindu measure of the capacity for sainthood, he nevertheless set his face freely towards the realisation of citizenship in stead. His whole mind was concentrated on his country, and even more than his mind, his heart. This was so much the case indeed, that in the years of illness which have now ended fatally, his thoughts were constantly upon public affairs, and this fact was felt by his family as a serious difficulty in nursing him. He would weep as he read the news of the day, and no personal sorrow seemed to touch him like those magnified and extended tragedies which today are so closely associated with the name of India. It is love and incorruptibility of such souls as this that form the best promise of the present for the mourning Motherland. I write as a disciple of a movement which feels that his devotion and disinterestedness were not the only things for which, we, the followers of Ramkrishna and Vivekananda, will do well to honour the name of A. M. Bose.

Over and above this, his was the realisation of that universality of sympathy, that catholicity of heart,

which to us are as a watch-word. His was the position of President in the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, of which the Swami Vivekananda, as a young man, was a formal member. He belonged, in fact, to a sect, and in a sense to a rival sect to that of the disciples of Ramkrishna. Yet his was the first handshake of welcome to greet our great leader when he landed in Calcutta on his return from the West. The Swami Vivekananda never forgot this fact. "All fight between us was forgotten," Mr. Bose also used to say, "and all he could remember was that an Indian had done something!" This was not, probably, either the first or the last time that Mr. A. M. Bose showed such large-heartedness. For it was no effort to him, but came freely and spontaneously. Indeed he could not have imagined feeling or acting differently. But on this occasion, he met with one as generous as himself to understand the rarity of such brotherhood.

A stern sense of justice and inflexible integrity were Mr. Bose's characteristics in dealing with authority. He never let things slide or called laziness by the name of mercy. He withdrew his name from the University Text-Book Committee, when it framed rules that he felt honest men could not condone. And the most pitiful feature of the Senate of the Calcutta University, under the new Act, was, in Bengali eyes, its attempt to constitute itself without his presence. Of his connection with the cause of nationality, it is needless to speak! Such devotion as his makes of it a religion. Those who were present at the burning-ghat on the morning of the 21st August, saw in that place on the heart where the men of more favoured countries might have worn their sovereign's decorations, in that place where the *Sadhu* might have held his *Gita*, and his beads, in that place where many of us carry the *Ishtam*, nothing more than a scrap of embroidered silk bearing the inscription—*Bande mataram*.

Nor does any one need to be reminded of the great ceremony, of the 16th October last year in which the foundation-stone of the Federation Hall was laid in his name and in which his presence and his part will for ever assure that the spot shall be looked upon as an altar, the day as a sacred anniversary. Whenever he passed that place afterwards, he said to some one, he made a silent salutation. For verily, he could not but regard it as the most sacred of all the temples of the Motherland. He had come there from his death-bed, he told the people, and his words have proved to be only too true. But now that this first of our standard-bearers has fallen, shall not a thousand leap forward to carry into the fire of battle those colours be held so high?

The permanence of a movement, said the Swami Vivekananda, is a question of the character it represents. Let us who are called by a religious name be the first to acknowledge that the great civic ideal which A. M. Bose, and the men standing round him and owning his influence, have built up amongst us, when judged by this test, promises a mighty future. Let us take this life, so unspotted in its record, so noble in its achievement, and, by loving imitation, let us make it our own. It is possible for Indian men to be great citizens and loyal sons of India, for here is one who has done it. May he be but the first of a great new order.

Aveet vale! Hale and farewell! So said the Latin people to their honoured dead. But for us, here, there shall be no *vale!* Rather in each civic and national hero of the future shall we feel that we have a right to greet once more the departed greatness of Ananda Mohan Bose. For he went first along that road, where to follow him, in the after-time there shall be many millions.

Let us make our own his incorruptibility, his chivalry for the defenceless and unknown, and above all, his stern

passion for righteousness. And we may rest assured that if we can make of ourselves such characters, there is no power on earth that can defeat us. For freedom cannot be achieved without free minds, nor, to men who have these, can it be long refused. Blessed are these, for they force open the Kingdom of Heaven, and all the world enters in their wake.

And so in the beautiful words of the Hindu benediction, may it be said unto him "Peace! Peace! Peace!" and may he attain the fulfilment of his heart's desire.

V

TWO FRAGMENTS

These two fragments were written by Sister Nivedita just four days before her death. The Sister used to keep a journal of her own in which she used to record day to day events and thoughts of her life. These two fragments of her last writing are intensely spiritual and reveal the state of her mind and thinking towards the end of her life.

DEATH

I thought last night that interfused with all this world of matter, penetrating it through, there may be another, call it meditation, or mind or what one wills, and that perhaps *that* is what death means. Not to change one's place—for since this is not matter, it can have no place—but to sink deeper and deeper into that condition of being more and more divested of the imagination of body. So that our dead are close to us physically, and yet one with all vastness, one with uttermost freedom and bliss.

And so I thought of the universal as mingled in this way with the finite, and we standing here on the borderline between the two, commanded to win for ourselves the franchise of both—the Infinite in the Finite. I am thinking more and more than Death means just a withdrawal into meditation, the sinking of the stone into the well of its being. There is the beginning before death, in the long hours of quiescence, when the mind hangs suspended in the characteristic thought of its life, in that thought of its life, in that thought which is the residuum of all its thoughts and acts and experience. Already in these hours the soul is discarnating, and the new life has commenced.

I wonder if it would be possible so to resolve one's whole life into love and blessing, without one single ripple of a contrary impulse that one might be wrapt away in that last hour and for evermore into one great thought; so that in eternity at least one might be delivered from thought of self, and know oneself only as a brooding presence of peace and benediction for all the *need* and suffering of the world.

THE BELOVED

Let me ever remember that the thirst for God is the whole meaning of life. My beloved is the Beloved, only looking through this window, only knocking at this door. The Beloved has no wants, yet He clothes Himself in human need, that I may serve Him. He has no hunger, yet He comes asking, that I may give. He calls upon me, that I may open and give Him shelter. He knows weariness, only that I may afford rest. He comes in the fashion of a beggar, that I may bestow. Beloved, O Beloved, all mine is Thine. Yes, I am all Thine. Destroy Thou me utterly, and stand Thou in my stead.

2/1/20

PART III
NIVEDITA AS SEEN BY OTHERS

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Sister Nivedita had won her access to the inmost heart of our society by her supreme gift of sympathy. She did not come to us with the impertinent curiosity of a visitor, nor did she elevate herself on a special high perch with the idea that a bird's eye view is truer than the human view because of its superior aloofness. She lived our life and came to know us by becoming one of ourselves. She became so intimately familiar with our people that she had the rare opportunity of observing us unawares. As a race we have our special limitations and imperfections, and for a foreigner it does not require a high degree of keen-sightedness to detect them. We know for certain that these defects did not escape Nivedita's observation, but she did not stop there to generalise, as most other foreigners do. And because she had a comprehensive mind, extraordinary insight of love, she could see the creative ideals at work behind our social forms and discover our soul that has living connection with its past and is marching towards its fulfilment.

But Sister Nivedita, being an idealist, saw a great deal more than is usually seen by those foreigners who can only see things, but not truths. The mental sense, by the help of which we feel the spirit of a people, is like the sense of a sight, or of touch—it is a natural gift. It finds its objects, not by analysis, but by direct apprehension. Those who have not this vision merely see events and not their inner association. Those who have no ear for music, hear sounds, but not the song. Therefore when, by reason of the mere lengthiness of their suffering, they threaten to establish the fact of the tune to be a noise, one need not be anxious about the reputation of music. Very often it is the mistakes which require a longer time to develop their tangles, while the right answer comes promptly.

It is a truism to say that shadows accompany light. What you feel as the truth of a people, has its numberless contradictions, just as the single fact of the roundness of the earth is contradicted by the innumerable facts of

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its hills and hallows. Facts can easily be arranged and heaped up into loads of contradiction; yet men having faith in the reality of ideals hold firmly that the vision of truth does not depend upon its dimension, but upon its vitality. And Sister Nivedita has uttered the vital truths about Indian life.

In fact Nivedita was the universal mother. We have seldom come across with such motherly love which can embrace the whole of a country outside the bounds of its family circle. We have glimpses of sense of duty on the part of men in this respect, but we have never witnessed such perfect sense of affection on the part of a woman. When Nivedita used to say 'our people', one could easily detect the tone of intense familiarity in that; it was so sincere and yet so spontaneous! Those who have seen and felt how deeply Sister Nivedita used to love the people of this country, must have realised the fact that we give our time, wealth, even life for the service of the people, but never can we give ourselves; that is to say we give everything to them except our heart. Here lies our difference with Nivedita who had the natural power to endear herself to the people of India, irrespective of caste, creed and religion. She could mix with them intimately and freely. She looked at them with respect and not with compassion.

Her love for India was genuine and it was no outburst of any temporary emotion. Her affection embraced one and all. She denied everything to herself for the benefit of the people among whom she lived and worked. This is why she could realise God among the poor. Nothing could daunt her in her love for the people of this country. She gave her all to India and therein lies her true dignity.

—Rabindranath Tagore

2

It is just thirteen years that a young English woman—a picture of health and vigour—with a face beaming with enthusiasm, called on me. She explained that her object was to serve our women—not as one from outside, but as one from within, and that she must therefore live

their life and be one of them. I could not help telling her of my misgivings knowing full well the almost insurmountable barrier that stood in her way.

It was not till a much later date, when I had been blessed with her friendship, that I came to know the strength that lay behind the life of Margaret E. Noble. How manifold were the blessings she conferred on all who came in contact with her and in how many directions she has effectively served our motherland, it is too early yet to speak. I can only give a few glimpses of that beautiful life which has so deeply impressed me.

It was no accident that had shaped her life. Her father, an eloquent English clergyman of great promise, had ungrudgingly sacrificed his young life in the service of the poor in Manchester. A great love existed between the father and the child. A friend of his, a preacher in India, had come on a visit. Being struck with the spiritual earnestness of the child's face, he had given her his blessings and said that one day the claim of India would touch her. This seemed prophetic of what was to come. Her father, too, before his death had told her young mother that he knew that one day a great call would come for the child and that the mother should then stand by her. Thus it was that she was consecrated, so that when the call did come, though the mother's heart was full of anguish at the thought of parting, the memory of her dead husband strengthened her. Henceforth India, the object of her daughter's devotion, became hers too; and Indian always found a touch of home in her house at Wimbledon.

The child gradually developed rare intellectual power. Even Huxley had been struck by her intellect. In time, she became the centre of a great educational movement, an outcome of which was the famous Sesame Club. At the very time when there were opened before her great possibilities in London for her splendid intellectual gifts, the call of India reached her. Swami Vivekananda was at that time preaching in London, and in response to this message of the East, she offered her lifelong services and immediately left for India.

A few months after the interview in which I could hold out very little hopes for her success in her educational efforts among our orthodox sisters, I was invited to her

little house in Bosepara Lane. I was astonished. She had accomplished the impossible. Having secured the house in the midst of orthodox surroundings, at first no Hindu servant would serve her; but went without help rather than wound the feelings of her neighbours. Many a day passed when there could be no cooking, and she lived on fruits and on what some kindly neighbour would send her. After a time however the people about came to regard her as their own in so far that even the most orthodox and saintly women felt happy to live in the house as her guest.

It is a wonderful story—how little by little she completely won the heart of the people by her patient love. At first the children of the neighbourhood came. Their mothers were not to be left behind. This led to the establishment of a kindergarten school, they too were drawn in and a separate class for grown-up women came to be started. Orphans and widows found in her a sympathetic heart ready to succour, and they were taken in to be trained by her as teachers. In this way "The House of the Sisters" was established in the heart of the orthodox community. Her work in India became so widely recognised that some of the greatest men both of Europe and America came to see her and went back inspired with a great love for the country which she had adopted as her own.

It was through her own writings, and the help of one in the West who came to regard her as her own daughter, that she maintained the house and the school. Those living in the neighbourhood know how by far the larger portion of her income was used by her to help the needy and feed the starving, even depriving herself of many necessities. Her civic training soon found scope in keeping the Lane and its neighbourhood a picture of cleanliness. This was not easy, but she showed the way by sweeping the Lane with her own hand. It was about this time that plague broke out for the first time in Calcutta. Many will remember the wild panic that seized the people. Trains and steamers were crowded with fleeing people. When the terror was at its climax, Sister Nivedita was active in her errands of mercy. She organised a band of young men, with whose help she cleansed the

most insanitary spots in the northern part of the town. She personally undertook the task of nursing plague patients, contact with whom was almost certain death. One little plague-stricken child, of humble parentage, lay in her lap dying and clasped its little hands round her, taking her for its mother.

It was this protecting motherhood that was so characteristic of Nivedita's life. I remember how on one occasion, she gave her own warm cloak to her servant while she herself shivered with cold, thinking that the poor servant's need was greater than hers. This is but a single instance of her depriving herself for others. She could never get accustomed to the privations and suffering of the people around her, and this was an abiding sorrow with her.

During her first voyage to India, there was on board the steamer a young Englishman whom his parents must have found a difficult problem at home and so had packed him off to India. He was intemperate and had made himself very obnoxious at table. While everyone else was annoyed at him and avoided him, her heart was touched with great sorrow and she trembled at the terrible fate that awaited him, cut off as he was from the influences and the restraints of home. She found occasion to see him, and to give him the only valuable thing she possessed—a gold watch, the birthday gift from her mother. She told him that he was on no account to pawn it but to keep it as a memento of those who believed in his being able to build up his life. A few years ago a most touching letter came from the mother of this boy, telling her how her son had been helped through her to choose a new life and had remembered her even when he lay dying in South Africa.

All the strength of that mother heart that would protect was now centred in India. The hardships she had to face, however, soon broke down her health and she lay a long time hovering between life and death. After her recovery she was specially warned by her doctor never again to endanger her health by overwork.

The news of the famine in East Bengal now reached her. For her there could be no quiet or peaceful life when there was suffering in the land. She would go. And for

many days she visited village after village in Barisal wading through flooded and submerged lands. The terrible picture she saw she delineated afterwards in her article, *Famine and Flood in East Bengal*. But that was long afterwards. The swamps she had passed through, the strain she had undergone, resulted in her being attacked by a severe type of malaria. The sufferings of the fever however were as nothing compared with the living over again of that anguish she had witnessed. It was after a long time that she recovered sufficiently to resume her work, but she was never fully free from its effects. Her dear friend in the West and medical friends here urged the absolute necessity of moving to a healthier part of the town, but she would be true to that spot which had first given her shelter. "The lane has adopted me and I must stay here and nowhere else." The little ones she had been toddling about in the lane had grown up about her and they were her children. Many a struggling one had come to her here whose lives she had ennobled. It was not for her to choose but be true to that trust that had come to her.

I am writing about her only as a woman, as I knew her in everyday life, full of austerity, and possessed with a longing for righteousness which shone round her like a pure flame. Others will know her as the great moral and intellectual force which had come to us in a time of great national need. Never have I known such a complete self-effacement. I have seen the greatest thinkers in England, France, America, religious leaders, social workers, politicians and scholars, filled with admiration and reverence for her clear vision and keen intellect and noble personality. All the rare gifts that opened out a great career for her in the West, she laid at the service of our motherland. Not that she loved England less but she believed that England could only remain great through righteousness. She had so completely identified herself with us that I never heard her use phrases like "Indian need" or "Indian Women". It was always *Our Need, Our Women*. She was never as an outsider who was striving and groping about to find ways of salvation.

Little more remains to be said. She had been engaged in completing two great works on India which she had been commissioned to do by two eminent publishers in London and New York. Along with it she had been carrying out the exacting duties of her school. All these told

on her health and it was thought that a change to the bracing climate of Darjeeling might restore her.

All her life she had selflessly devoted herself to work, but during last days of her life it seemed to her she had not effaced herself enough. Some one had once spoken of her dominant personality. This must have come to her mind and she prayed that she might now be taken away so that there would be room for others to grow.

—Lady Abala Bose

3

Sister Nivedita stands out in bold relief against the background of the national mind,—a great personality—carved by the conscious desire of the people into their own image and likeness and into the living representation of their life and ideals. She consciously voiced the silent and the voiceless need of millions and she uttered unto them that message which all the powers of her soul, even at the sacrifice of her own self, formulated as the national consciousness.

There has not been in the making of the modern Indian mind a personality with such a capacity for understanding its problems and with such inexhaustible energy in the direction of work. Day in and day out for more than fourteen years, she had made her spirit one with that of the land, penetrating into every nook and crevice of the Indian experience for evidences of its greatness as fewest have ever done, searching for the powers and the self-recreating spirit of India. The result and the realisation is the idea and the coinage of the term, the national consciousness.

Strange beyond measure is her life and place in India, because, coming from a distant land, she had been able, through a process which probably she herself did not fully understand, to reshape everything she previously was—in spite of the fact that her personality was intense—and take rebirth into the Indian consciousness, becoming a patriot among patriots, and a messenger among messengers to the Indian peoples. Studying the mission of the Sister Nivedita one become aware of her life, not so much as of a single personality, as of the

development, struggle and experience of a complex and expression of a complex and representative mind, whose occupation was the moulding of the highest intellectual illumination into channels of important usefulness.

Before coming to India, she had cherished dreams of a new method in education, and of a work which should enlarge the scope of learning from mere instruction to a real awakening of mind. She had hoped much, and, it was her aspiration that womankind would enter new paths of life and develop the highest individualism of which it was capable. The newest moods of thought that occupied the leading minds of Europe were hers, and with a clear conception of a purpose of life, she turned the currents of her personal energy into founding and upholding the standard and the principles of a higher education and also of a new and expansive individualism for woman.

With this she was busily engaged when destiny put her into the path of Hinduism. In the fall of 1895, the Swami Vivekananda, coming from his great success in preaching the Gospel of Hinduism in America, sojourned for some time in London. The Sister Nivedita, or as she was then known, Miss Margaret E. Noble; was of that circle upon whom the Swami made a living and lasting impression.

The full import of that impression, however, she herself did not become aware of, as she admits, until her coming to India. She had accepted the philosophy of the Hindus, as defined by the Swami, and even in those early days of her discipleship to Hinduism was foreshadowed that particular understanding she later became fully possessed of and revealed, namely, that in India religion and society are one, that the national righteousness is equal to the righteousness that religion proposes—the Highest Expression and the Highest Individualism of Man.

She saw that behind all human struggle and expression and underlying all forms of human aspiration, whether in the sciences, or in religion, as a special form, was the Indomitable Determination of Man to reveal Himself and to find and express that Freedom of His Own Nature from the bondages and blunders to which his undeveloped consciousness is heir.

"All this is one", she once remarked in this relation in one of her unusual moments of insight, and this which with some is only a self-satisfactory doctrine of metaphysics grew with every hour of her career as a motto and an inspiration for work in the concrete. She drew the bars of an iron determination to understand and serve across the personal contentment and peace she might have gained had she sought solitude and like a *sannyasini*, lived her life in contemplation on purely religious matters.

That settled happiness she intentionally renounced. Emotion should only serve to colour thought," she insisted and so we find her speaking little of her personal feeling about the religion and land of her adoption, while on the other hand we see her pouring her understanding of the needs and of the spirit of India, which she had gathered after much intellectual toil and pain, as molten gold into the forms and materials of a living nationalism.

Patriotism with her was religion, and *Jnana* to her was that understanding of the land which would inflame the individual to self-sacrifice and spirited endeavour for the masses. She had realised the urgent need of maintaining, in their purity and vigour, those characteristic ideals which make up the body of the Indian society, as well as its religion. Therefore, she maintained that only in so far as India had perfect freedom of national expression, could she keep in her vision, as a constant presence, the company of ideals which specialise her among the nations of the world.

A survey of her life and work in India is likewise a survey of all the growth which the spirit of India has made during its present epoch-making period. Her thought had concerned itself with every form of the national awakening. Of many forms she was, indeed, the fountain-head and inspiration. It was she who took up the cause of the future Indian Womanhood. Translating all her thought for the education of womanhood in the land of her birth to the service of woman in this land, she opened and maintained a school for girls in the very heart of orthodox Calcutta.

This was the most cherished of all her purposes. It was a passionate desire on her part and it inspired her to

go through many hardships and live the ascetic life of the Hindu Brahmacharini. The school was the temple of her work and of her hopes. It was the sanctuary of the truth she perceived and uttered concerning India. Here her life was spent among the women and the people, identified with their interests and their life.

Wonderful, by itself, was that life she lived, even as a person—a life of such constant renunciation that it would have told severely and in a short time upon one less gifted with the capacity for living in a world of deepest thought and unflinching purpose. Her life was a flame of intellectual and personal austerity.

Utterly oblivious of physical surroundings she lived as she was, a giant force of mind concerned with itself and accustomed to find companionship and peace, in its own activity, unawares, as it were, of the body. With her, life was a constant meditation upon the problems of India, broken only by the demands made upon her time and thought and service.

Those whose fortune it was to know her, found themselves, when she spoke on those subjects she had nearest her will, transported into a world where ideals are realities and thought, a living power. Her penetration into the world of ideas and intentions was such that what was previously in the mind only an intellectual consciousness of some truth became, under the radiance of her thought, an illumination and actual insight.

Her conversation itself was literature, but both the literature of her speech and the literature of her thought were the outcome of years and years of effort. "Work! Work! Work!" was her motto. She had no time for theorists or sentimentalists. She dealt with living forms and detested idle speculations. Her ideal of perfection was in work that required effort without regard to time or personal sacrifice. "The man who built the Tajmahal," she said, "knew, also, how to build a hut perfectly. Every perfect thing is a form of *samadhi* or spiritual illumination." Such a perception of work she brought to the task of nation-making in this land.

Like a blast of a trumpet to action was her message to the pioneers of Indian art, literature and civic life. Through her severe criticism of following foreign ideas

in art and literature or life she turned the tide of tendency in these respects and awakened an original and national purpose that has since become instinct. Everywhere she found new meanings in old customs and great learning in old traditions and saw that running as a stream through a necklace of pearls was the synthesis of the Indian consciousness amid a seemingly hopeless variety of history and culture. She saw that every event, circumstance and condition that has served to mould the Indian mind in its historical experience is inseparably blended with every other and therefore she proclaimed on all occasions the historic and social oneness of the Mother-Heart, the Mother-Mind, the Mother-Church.

In quest of learning and understanding for the larger quest to serve, she traversed the length and breadth of India, here and there to secure a connecting link in Indian art or history or to tap the deeper levels of Indian life or come into relation with the spiritual purport of the people. Everywhere she left the impression of a soul whose life was an onrush of sincerity, overwhelming power and vigorous effort in the redeeming of a national self-respect and of a national oneness. She preached these things through her literature and through her personality. Masculine-minded and masculine in will, she brooked no meddling with or distorting of her convictions she had; and they were many—were the outcome of an earnest search and of a sincere intellect. She had nothing to gain and much to lose from some of the positions she took, but once her will was set it was immovable.

With her passes one of those few who have made Hinduism masculine and aggressive. She believed in a Hindu self-consciousness that should made active the potential powers of the people. She hoped for an India united in civic purposes, with the aspiration to solve its own problems according to the understanding of an enlightened people, and to march boldly in the vanguard of the nations, justly realising the inestimable contribution it has made to the experience and civilisation of man.

Her life affords the vision of a great soul, struggling amidst adverse conditions to express the truth it had so clearly seen and to refract in the thought of the nation

the illumination it has seen concerning it. She was the apostle of a gospel which will at no distant time be the *dharma* of a new national life; for a life such as hers cannot be lived in vain.

Somewhere sometime it will burst as an effulgence upon the blindness that covers our eyes and we shall see what now we cannot see, but what she saw, and we shall hear to what we are now deaf but which she heard and we shall have entered a condition of realisation for which we hope but which now passes our understanding. Even now before the dawn of that day we are sensing the message of which she has been the seer and prophet, and when that day dawns it will be on an India over which the Sister Nivedita lingered in thought and in love.

—J. F. Alexander

4

How can one begin to describe Sister Nivedita? As a woman, a friend or an enthusiast? As a passionate votress of beauty in art, in literature or in life? As a religious mystic, or a political missionary of the fiery cross? As an orator whose voice was like a trumpet with a silver sound, or a writer able to charm new and noble cadences from the English tongue? As an interpreter between the West and the East, or a vehement champion of the East in all its aspects against the West? As the earnest advocate of all that is best in the modern woman's movement, or herself the proud and spotless sum of womanhood?

Friendship with Nivedita was not a slow growth. It sprang to maturity at the first meeting, or not at all; and I do not know that anyone was ever privileged to know the depths of her womanly kindness without first being subjected to that mortal test. To be admitted to her friendship was to establish a claim upon an inexhaustible gold mine. She gave herself without reserve. She lived for her friends and her work. For them she would pour out all her wondrous eloquence, and her vast and curious knowledge, she would travel any distance and would incur any labour and anxiety. Whatever she did, she did with all her might and she never did anything for herself.

To her friends she would open her heart without the smallest reserve. She talked even more freely than she wrote and her conversation, rich spontaneous, clear cut as a judicial utterance, threw new light upon art, literature and even science, and revealed her bold and fiery aspirations after Indian nationality.

If this was not her religion it was certainly a large part of it. She threw herself into the politics of Bengal at a critical time, and it would be difficult to exaggerate her influence upon the national movement. That influence was, of course, vehemently, nay fanatically anti-British. She had both Scottish and Irish blood, and she hated the English with all the sentimental fervour which was commoner than it is both in Scotland and Ireland. With true feminine obstinacy, she refused to look upon the bright side of British rule in India. She modified her views a year or two ago, but at the critical period I am speaking of, she was firmly convinced that the British Raj was purely parasitic, and that India could not hope to recover herself until the noxious growth had been torn, more or less violently, away. Nor did she shrink from the consequences of her theories. She looked on bloodshed with the mind of Krishna in the "Bhagavad Gita". That is a mild way of indicating how she could talk—although no kinder hearted woman ever breathed.

She came to see afterwards, I think, that violence is no remedy for the state of India or for anything else. But ten years ago she was full of the revolutionary ideas which have since obtained so lurid an advertisement all over Asia. And as she was far too honest to keep them to herself and as her influence over young Bengal was greater than most people have ever suspected, she probably did more to create an atmosphere of unrest than all the newspapers in the world.

I myself heard her deliver a lecture in the Town Hall of Calcutta six or seven years ago, for which she would assuredly have been deported a few years later, its very title was seditious. And the platform from which she spoke was crowded with Europeans, while the body of the hall was a dense mass of young Bengalis, who listened to her as though she were inspired. The address itself was an oratorial "tour de force!" "Dynamic

Religion" was the theme—in other words "patriotism"—and for an hour and a half Nivedita held the vast audience spell bound. She spoke without notes in her strong melodious voice, and the upshot of it all was—"No more words-words-words. Let us have deeds-deeds-deeds." The seed then shown fructified earlier perhaps than she herself expected.

Her best friends twisted her with being unpractical. Of course she was. They say her *Web of Indian life* presents us with a picture idealised out of all relation to the facts. So much the worse for the facts! And so much the more wonderful that a Western genius should have pierced beyond the "flashy screen" to the exquisite ideals which lay behind. She is also charged with seeing India through a roseate haze. Indians themselves, we are told, failed to recognise their country as it is reflected in her magic glass.

Nivedita lived in Bosepara Lane, Bagh Bazar. The reason was simply that she had undertaken an educational work for which that was the most convenient centre. Herein she was practical enough. All that we can say of her inner life is that it sustained and glorified her, leading her on with ever living zeal to fresh discoveries of beauty and harmony at every turn in her pilgrimage. It clothed her with the armour of the Happy Warrior. "Whose high endeavours are an inward light that makes the path before him always bright."

To those who loved her it is difficult to realise that this vivid, brave and gifted personality has vanished from our sphere. But one feels that there must have been something triumphant even about her death.

—A. J. F. Blair

5

I recall with a curious feeling the first occasion on which I met Sister Nivedita. It was at the house of a European lady in Loudon Street, in July 1902, a few days only after the death of Vivekananda. A number of English people, and Indian, the latter mostly members of the Brahmo Samaj, had been invited to meet Sister

Nivedita, who seemed to me singularly out of her element. She was asked to speak, and I recall her address as a deeply, earnest tribute to the customs and ideals of Indian womanhood, such as her friends constantly heard from her, combined with a trenchant attack upon the ruling race for its complete failure to understand the essentials of the society which its institutions were destroying. No one who knows the circumstances will be surprised to hear that the address was anything but a success as an adjunct to an Indo-European tea-party in the fashionable quarter of Calcutta; but upon one auditor at least the personality and the message made a deep impression. I was then a new-comer, having joined the staff of *The Statesman* hardly two months before. The whole affair was strange—the afternoon gathering, the meeting of West and East, and this Western voice speaking to Europeanised Indians of the greatness and enduring beauty of the customs and ideals from which they had cut themselves adrift. It seemed, as I look back upon it now, a far from promising beginning; but it led to a friendship which to me, as to my wife, must always be the most valuable and revealing of all personal experiences. Sister Nivedita was living then, as always during the remainder of her Calcutta life, in the little house at Bagh Bazar, with its two tiny courtyards and the exquisite simplicity of its ordering. Although entirely devoted to the school and its attendant activities, there were no rules of exclusion in the House of the Sisters, provided only that the privileged male visitor did not intrude during the hours given up to the orthodox Hindu ladies who came for tuition in needlework or English. And nearly always the Sundays were available, from the early breakfast, served with the extreme of simplicity and with constant merriment on the little verandah, through long hours of earnest talk, or eager discussion. Her house was a wonderful rendezvous. Not often did one meet a Western visitor, save at those times when an English or American friend would be making a stay in Calcutta, but nowhere also, so far as our experience went, was there an opportunity of making acquaintance with so many and varied types of Indian character. Here would come Members of Council and leaders in the civic

affairs of Calcutta and Bengal, men whose names and doings were daily canvassed in the newspapers; Indian artists and men of letters; teachers, speakers, journalists, students; frequently a travelled member of the Order of Ramkrishna, occasionally a wandering scholar, not seldom a religious leader or public man from a far province. At one time, as I remember with peculiar pleasure, the most frequent visitor was an inimitable Bengali editor, full of keen sayings and sardonic laughter and wit that stung like fine cords. And above all other occasions there stands out a morning of the cold weather, I think in 1906, when we had the pleasure of conducting Mr. William Jennings Bryan and his wife, then taking India on their way round the world, to a particularly joyous breakfast in Bagh Bazaar.

At the time of which I speak, Sister Nivedita was writing hard, the daily labour of the school being left largely to her very efficient colleague. The publication in 1904, of "The Web of Indian Life" had made her work widely known in England and America, and she followed this up with constant contributions to the Indian monthlies—in which she dealt, in the style that gained a hearing for everything she wrote, with the ideals of Indian education and art, the new claims of the civic consciousness, the position of woman, and, as the basis of every theme, with the re-statement and interpretation of Indian ideas of conduct, character and society.

I cannot speak here of her remarkable, and as some of us feel, quite unique relation to and influence upon the student community. It will, I think, be agreed that within the last ten years a great change has come about in the character and demeanour of Bengali student, a change which many regard with misgiving. Naturally I do not refer to those aspects of the subject which have caused disquietude among the authorities: they have nothing to do with the influence which went out, in ever-widening circles as the years passed, from Bose Para Lane. I refer to those developments in which, whatever the shade of our political opinion, we cannot but rejoice. come about in the character and demeanour of Bengali student, a change which many regard with misgiving. Naturally I do not refer to those aspects of the subject

which have caused disquietude among the authorities: they have nothing to do with the influence which went out, in ever-widening circles as the years passed, from Bose Para Lane. I refer to those developments in which, whatever the shade of our political opinion, we cannot but rejoice. Many things have been operating to give the young Indian a new view of life and education and possibility; but no one, I think, who knew Sister Nivedita and the things for which she stood can doubt that the growth in young Bengal of a stronger and finer sense of social and civic duty is due in an incalculable degree to her personal influence and to the force and eloquence of her written appeal.

In the years which followed the return from the first of her long visits to the West (1902) Sister Nivedita seemed likely to develop into a regular and constant speaker. She lectured often, and not in Calcutta alone. I remember several notable lecturing tours—especially one in the Madras Presidency in the cold weather of 1902-03, and one in Western India shortly afterwards. Latterly, however, for reasons obvious to her friends, she showed a disposition to confine her activities to writing and to direct personal contact with those who were making towards the New India of which she dreamed. And yet it has always seemed to me that public speech gave her the opportunity most adapted to the delivery of her message. She varied greatly on the platform. Always rather at the mercy of a too difficult thesis, given to the use of socio-philosophic terms and a far too compressed method of exposition, she sometimes scored far above the comprehension of her audience, and I have known her give an address which to those who did not know the speaker and the utter sincerity from which the words came, must have seemed, not only unintelligible but ruined by something for which I can find no better word than pretentiousness. And yet how far removed was anything of display from that fine and nobly veracious mind! One thinks of her best (and nearly always she was so), addressing some crowded gathering in the years before her strength was broken and before there came upon her that sense of "the little done, the undone vast", in which latterly she seemed to abide.

S. N. 20

Many times I heard her speak to groups of students, or in the Calcutta Town Hall, before a great audience, on her own absorbing theme—the religion of Nationalism; before English gatherings in hall or church or drawing-room. And I have thought, and still think, that her gift of speech was something which when fully exercised I have never known surpassed—so sure and faultless in form, so deeply impassioned, of such flashing and undaunted sincerity.

I do not think that even the best of her books represents the strength and range of her intellect, notwithstanding the brilliant literary gift which was undoubtedly hers. *Kali The Mother* (1900), the little volume into which she put the first-fruits of her Indian studies under Vivekananda, revealed something of her interpretative faculty, although its title and sentiment were startling to those English readers who knew only the ordinary European view of the "bloody goddess." Into *The Web of Indian Life* (1904) she put, as her friends knew, all the force of her mind and all the intensity of her faith. The result, fine and powerful as it is, has always seemed to me far below what might have been expected from her had she lived to write the interpretation of Indian domestic life and of the social structure of Hinduism to which she would undoubtedly have devoted herself. She came, I feel sure, to realise this, and her two later books showed a great advance in mastery of style. It may be that *The Master as I Him* (1909) will never find a public much beyond the rank of those, in India and the West, who have been captured by the message of Vivekananda, but one finds it hard to believe that the *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* will not reach an increasing circle with the passage of the years.

We think of her life of sustained and intense endeavour, her open-eyed and impassioned search for truth; the courage that never quailed, the noble compassionate heart. We think of her tending the victims of plague and famine, putting heart into the helpless and defeated, royally spending all the powers of a rich intelligence and an overflowing humanity in the service of those with whom she had cast her lot.

—S. K. Ratcliffe

It is not necessary to identify oneself with all the views and ideals of the late Sister Nivedita to be able to appreciate their worth. Her books and other writings were undoubtedly valuable. But the chief lesson of her life lay in the life itself rather than in any of its achievements, remarkable as they undoubtedly were.

A person of her intense spirituality, force of character, strength of mind and wide range of studies could easily have chalked out for herself a career of distinction at home. Yet, with ever-increasing self-effacement she dedicated herself to the cause of India and Hinduism. At the same time her identification with the cause of India and Hinduism did not assume the character of that ill-concealed pitying patronage which with some pro-Indian Westerners goes under the name of sympathy. She really tried to understand India and Hinduism. Instead of taking as her Master some invisible misty Mahatma whose existence ordinary mortals must question, she spoke of one—Swami Vivekananda—as the Master the historicity and definite character of whose militant personality, no body can question. She lived among the poor and needy in an antiquated house situated in a narrow lane in the northern quarters of Calcutta, lived a life of great simplicity, austerity and benevolence. To this house, with its little garden plot and the verandah facing it she was as deeply attached as any queen could be to her palace and pleasure grounds.

Her idealism in all the different realms of thought was tinged by religion. For this reason we found that in her appreciation of art, she gave the highest place to religious art in all countries. Some superficial people might think that it was a craze that led her to adopt Hinduism as her religion and India as her adopted country. The halo of idealism with which she loved to surround the Hindu woman and her home did not blind her to the excellence of the civic character of the Western woman's ideal. Her knowledge of Hindu culture and thought—we are speaking of knowledge from inside, not of mere book knowledge—was unequalled and unsurpassed—it was almost complete. She has rendered good

service to the world and to India by writing with power and insight of much that is noble in the Hindu home, Hindu life and Hindu Institutions. At the same time she was not an orthodox Hindu in the accepted sense. She has repeatedly emphasised the supreme need of woman's education, she has repeatedly written that a girl's marriage must be deferred to a period which would make education possible.

In the spheres of sociology and economics she was a clear and vigorous thinker. In many passages of her writings, she has shown that Indian political economy must be written from a different standpoint from that of the West. She took a profound and active interest in Indian politics. She was a pronounced Nationalist. She did not like partisanship or faction fights in Indian politics. She believed in the greatness and efficacy of our presenting a united front. Nothing grieved her more than quarrels in our ranks. The promotion of the cause of Indian nationality was with her a mission and a passion, as was woman's education.

She was a born journalist. She wrote with brilliancy, vigour and originality and, even on common place themes, with something like inspired fervour. She could write with great facility and on a variety of topics. Even the most hackneyed topics were invested by her pen with new power and grace, and become connected with the primal source of all strength. She could never be a hireling. She would either write on topics of her own choice and when the spirit moved her, or not write at all. She once refused a handsome remuneration offered to her by a certain European Review because the editor wanted her to write on prescribed topics.

She was indeed a sister and she was *Nivedita*, dedicated, to the service of all who came within the orbit of her life's way. She seemed to have an almost instinctive appreciation of the artistic. Great and noble ideas beautifully expressed through the medium of painting, sculpture or architecture made an immediate appeal to her aesthetic sense. She did much to interpret our Art to us and the West alike. Her writings in this line were unique.

—*Ramananda Chatterjee*

Sister Nivedita's—otherwise known as Miss Margaret Noble—was a most *dynamic* personality. The adjective is her own in a sense, used of course in another context. She spoke once, I remember, to a large and appreciative audience in the Calcutta Town Hall, on what she called "Dynamic Religion." It was a protest against the excessively speculative and quiescent emphasis of our national life and philosophy. As a disciple of Swami Vivekananda she was not unaware of the supreme value of the speculative and quiescent life of the true man of God. But the current quietude and hair-splitting speculations of the pundits are of a different type; these are not really *satvic* but *tamasic*; represent not the calm of the highest union with the Universal but the inertia of the spiritually dead. This quietude was no part of Nivedita's religion. It was no part of the religion of her Master either. Religion to her was not a passive pursuit of what merely is but an untiring and ever-vigilant effort for the realisation of what ought to be. This perpetual striving of what ought to be, constitutes the dynamic element of every religion. And it was this what Nivedita meant when she spoke to us on *Dynamic Religion*.

Born among Christian peoples, in a Christian family, Margaret Noble gradually ceased, like so many others of her class and country, to be a Christian. And it seems to me that her revolt against present-day Christianity was very largely due to the fact that it is not, in spite of all its restless efforts to make the world better than what it is, truly and rationally dynamic. In fact, the inner logic of all credal religions, that claim absolute authority for the teachings of a Master who lived many centuries or milleniums ago, and finality for a particular scheme of religious and spiritual disciplines that suited a particular people at a particular stage of their mental and social evolution, must inevitably be more or less rigidly conservative and static, and not freely progressive and dynamic. The theology of the Christian churches prevents the free play of the human intellect; and its ethics, owing to its excessive legalism tends to cripple the human personality. The Jewish Jehova was more dynamic, in

some aspects, than the Christian Deity. Paganism was far more dynamic than even Judaism. But Nivedita found this dynamic element of the human religion nowhere more fully realised and represented than in the Hindu cult of the *Kali*.

In fact, I always felt that Nivedita was at heart a pagan of pagans. She was literally a child of Nature. Her love of Nature was as passionate and personal as that of the ancient Greeks. I never found another modern, man or woman, in India or Europe, though I have heard of some Hindu devotees of this type, whose whole being—body, mind and soul—seemed to be so completely attuned to the life of the outer elements. Her whole system appeared to me to have been uniformly responsive to the moods of the nature-forces about her.

Her scientific education had killed, on the one hand, her faith in the Abstraction which ordinary Christianity calls its God, and had, on the other, strengthened her hold of the realities of the Natural Order.....And Nivedita, before she came in contact with Vivekananda, must have, I think, built her inner soul-life upon the ancient inheritances of the modern Christian civilisation.....Nivedita, in any case, found the thing that she had evidently been longing for, in the religion of the Hindus as it is being pursued and lived by countless numbers in India, and as it was first interpreted to her by Swami Vivekananda. And here she found indeed a good deal more than what could be found in either the Greek or the Roman religion.

Loved all over India, in her adopted name of Sister Nivedita, her self-effacement was almost complete. Even few Indians, especially of the modern educated classes, have as yet been inspired by so all-consuming a passion for India, as transfused this British woman. Nivedita came to us, as no European had as yet come, not as an adept, but as a novice; not as a teacher, but as a learner. She did not pose before us as a prophetess but always stood, in sincere love and reverence, as a worshipper. She came simply to lose herself in us, and by so losing herself, to find herself back, per chance, as a true seer of our spirit and culture. Her devotion to our land and people was unique.

—Bepin Chandra Pal

"A daughter of Ind"—rightly has this title been given by a French author to her biography of Sister Nivedita of the Ramkrishna-Vivekananda Mission. True, Miss Margaret Noble was born in Ireland, but India was her spiritual home. She was India's daughter by adoption and she consecrated her life to the cause of India's uplift. She worked for the regeneration of India by sacrificing her own life. She toiled for India and laid her mortal remains on India's soil at the early age of 45.

Early in life, as a school teacher in England, with no special interest in philosophy or Oriental learning, she first heard in Vivekananda's speeches how India had a spiritual truth to offer to the modern world which mankind would be poorer for despising. She sought him out, and by doubting and discussion was at last convinced of the truth of the Vedanta and its supreme importance to us in this machine age. Then coming into direct touch with India she realised with sorrow and shame the present degraded condition of the race that had once thought out and preached such sublime truths. Henceforth her life was devoted to one task—the raising of the fallen Hindus. In her newly chosen monastic life she rightly took her name, *Nivedita*, the devoted one, the dedicated soul.

She was not a blind admirer of everything in India's past or present. She asked us to penetrate to the inner significance of our old myths and legends, rites and customs, and take to our modern life everything that was good in them. Here her marvellous power of interpretation came into play.

She stood apart from our Hindu revivalists in never forgetting the news of the modern age. She was not an obscurantist or defender of everything past. She keenly perceived, what Vivekananda has preached to us, that modern economic activity and modern science are not incompatible with Hindu spirituality, but rather absolutely necessary for the permanent spiritual uplift of the Indians. At Bodh Gaya, the very scholarly and good natured *Mohant*, wanted to endow some chairs for the spread of knowledge. Sister Nivedita urged him that it

should be rather for higher scientific teaching of our people than for creating centres of teaching Sanskrit or philosophy of which there was no dearth.

One day when I was praising an aged Orientalist for his valuable historical work, she replied in a pained voice, "Oh, don't speak of him, he is a flatterer of the English... Never lower your flag to foreigner. Try to be the greatest authority in the world in the particular branch of research that you have chosen for yourself. India must be recognised as the first here."

We were struck by her penetrative interpretation of the Indian scriptures, art, and folk lore which fact was highly appreciated by Rabindranath. The poet had his own beautiful way of expression, of course, but he said that Nivedita had the power of going into the very heart of things and she was marvellous exponent of them. She visited many sacred places of India undergoing privations and hardships like any Hindu pilgrim, and explained the inner significance of the *Tirthas* in her own novel way.

Sister Nivedita had a wonderful, sympathetic, and penetrative power of going to the very heart of things. The rituals, the customs and the traditions, some of which we have forgotten and some of which we follow blindly or as explained by the priests, were restored to their original colour, their true meaning, by the novel and critical exposition of the Sister. She wanted India to regain her past glory political, cultural, military. She was a supporter of Indian political aspirations. Passionately loving the independence of India, she once remarked that the intellect of Bengal and the valour of the Punjab should act side by side for the political regeneration of India. She was a nationalist of nationalists.

She loved her adopted land and admired all that is great and good in Mother India. She would not spare anybody if he spoke ill of Mother India. Nivedita contributed to the cause of India's regeneration by her call for true manhood and sincerity in our public life. In fact, she rendered the noblest service to India in more ways than one.

—Sir Jadunath Sarcar

I have the highest respect for Sister Nivedita for the noble qualities of her head and heart. She was a universal Sister; her sisterly love was not confined to the people of Baghbazar, or of Calcutta, or of India, but the whole world. All the same her memory is specially sacred and dear to the Hindu inhabitants of Baghbazar, with whom she associated almost daily, for years together, and sought to serve them as their guardian angel. Not only did she nurse the sick like a loving mother or a sister, be the patient a victim of plague or cholera, utterly regardless of her own safety, or bring comfort to the mind of a friendless orphan or widow by affording pecuniary help, but she had also a kind word and sweet smile for all whom she met; and that smile was verily a benediction. She was more than a queen among womankind—she was a goddess in human shape, who dropped down from heaven, as it were to minister to the happiness of the suffering humanity. She consecrated her divine life to the services of her fellow-beings. If she loved the Hindus and their manners and customs so ardently, it was not from a blind passion. A highly intellectual and vastly read woman of a positive turn of mind, she would not take anything on trust. If she was captivated with the wisdom and beauties of the Hindu social system, it was after having thoroughly studied it from all points of view, favourable and unfavourable. The Hindus can never repay their obligation to the deceased lady for her intelligent and unassailable vindication of their social customs before the people of the West. Now that she is gone from our midst, she is now in a better and higher world where she is reaping the fruits of the noble life and enjoying a sort of celestial bliss of which we have no conception.

She was an *Avatar*, as it were, of ideal self-sacrifice. No European, male or female, loved India so passionately and so sincerely as Nivedita did. To the service of India she dedicated her whole life, and hence she was called 'Nivedita'. As a matter of fact, she has sacrificed herself for the sake of her beloved land of adoption.

—Motilal Ghosh

Sister Nivedita was an embodiment of vitality and personality. We have seldom seen such a dynamic personality and yet at the same time how sweet, simple and sincere she was! The Sister adopted India as her own motherland and this adoption was as complete as we can imagine. The awakening we see around us today in the spheres of our culture, our nationalism, is undoubtedly due to the fact that Sister Nivedita made the dead bones alive and infused life in to them. Intellectually gifted as she was, she could not confine herself to any particular institution and this is why her activities embraced all spheres of our national life. She came to India as the disciple of Swami Vivekananda and dedicated herself, heart and soul to the cause of India and thus gloriously fulfilled the beautiful name given to her by her Master.

Sister Nivedita was the most able interpreter of the ideals of India to the peoples of the West and in this regard we must remember her services with gratitude. One thought that comes uppermost in my mind is this that she was one of the foremost exponent of constructive thinking in India. As we go through the pages of her inspiring volumes, we are surprised at her penetrating analysis of the varied aspects, political, economic, social and spiritual, of the national resurgence of Bengal at the opening of the twentieth century. One hardly meets her equal among her contemporaries. The country really owes a debt to her for her selfless sacrifice in the cause of India. We owe much to her than could be possibly described. It was rare privilege to have known Sister Nivedita; a privilege of which one can be justly proud and which one can never forget.

This great woman—woman indeed in her appreciation of values; in her affection for the afflicted; in her capacity to attract love and give it; in her intimate knowledge of the problems of India and her untiring labour and wisdom to meet them; in her simple, serene, and severe domesticity; this great leader—leader indeed in the way she discovered the glory of India; in the way she fulfilled the task entrusted to her by her great Master; in the hard work that she herself put in from day to day, giving her

message by tongue and pen, all the time associating herself with our hopes and aspirations; in her courage to face all dangers bravely; and above all, in her clear vision of the goal and her equally clear idea regarding the means that would take her there; this great woman and leader, was truly England's best gift to India. As a fiery lover of liberty for India, Nivedita roused a slumbering people to a sense of self-respect, and took them on to paths of true patriotism and active resistance to wrong and repression and exploitation of the alien rulers. We bow down our head reverentially to the sacred memory of Sister Nivedita.

—*Sir Rash Bihari Ghosh*





SISTER NIVEDITA

stands out in bold relief against the background of the national mind,—a great personality—carved by the unconscious desire of the people into their own image and likeness and into the living representation of their life and ideals. She consciously voiced the silent and the voiceless need of millions and she uttered unto them that message which all the powers of her own soul, even at the sacrifice of her own self, formulated as the national consciousness.

Strange beyond measure is her life and place in India, because, coming from a distant land, Nivedita had been able, through a process, to re-shape everything she previously was—in spite of the fact her personality was intense—and take rebirth into the Indian consciousness, becoming a patriot among patriots, and a messenger among messengers to the Indian peoples.

Here is the full story of this wonderfully pure life, white and fragrant as a lily.

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